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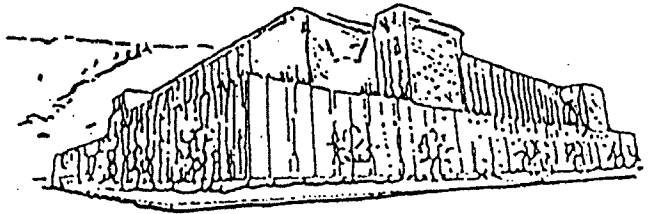
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Bitterroot Dreams

by

Yukari Usuda

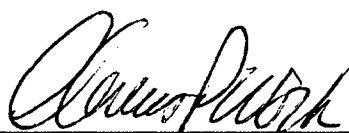
B.S., The University of Iowa

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism

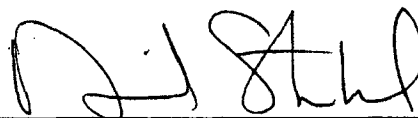
The University of Montana

1998

Approved by:



Clemens P. Work, Chairman



Dean, Graduate School

12-1-98

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Bitterroot
Dreams



a bitterroot flower (photo: USDA Forest Service in Hamilton)

Bitterroot Dreams

Director: Clemens P. Work



Ravalli County, located in the Bitterroot Valley, is the fastest growing county in the state of Montana and now faces a critical time of change. The influx of people has had adverse impacts on the community and the environment. Yet the county has no land use regulations to deal with the growth that has been changing the natural and social landscapes. The conflict of interests over land is inevitable and remains unsolved.

Public land management has also been controversial in the valley where more than 70 percent of the area is under the care of the government agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service. People have been looking for a balance between nature--including wildlife--and humans, but common ground hasn't been found yet.

The purpose of this project is to let ordinary people tell their stories regarding land use and management, because their voices are hardly ever heard in public. Through their dreams, challenges and perspectives, it is possible to acknowledge complicated issues and the complex social structure as well.

Preface

History suggests American dreams have a tie to the land. Europeans sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in hopes of making their dreams come true in the land of opportunities. When the East was no longer available for immigrants, latecomers headed to the West, where they aspired to seize the land in abundance, often fighting against natives. In the mid-19th century, Montana's first Caucasian settlers established a community of 53 households in the Bitterroot Valley as their promised land.

At the dawn of the 21st century, the area, now called Ravalli County, is the fastest-growing county in the state of Montana, and the community can be seen as an epitome of western Montana, where conflict of interest over land frequently occur.

In my professional project, I try to illustrate 12 individuals in the valley and their occupations, socio-economic environments and the dreams they aim to accomplish. Their voices depict their everyday life, pride and obstacles, which characterizes the nature of community as well as the nature of American dreams.

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B. J. Mills



St. Mary's Mission



Victor Charlo



Introduction

With the rhythm of the drumbeat, the songs of Native Americans declare the roots, commemorating the trail of grief. One drum group is named, "Yamncút ʔu sqelíx^W," which means "gathering of the people" in Salish. On a sunny June afternoon, more than 300 tribal members gather to honor their ancestors who were forced to leave their land, the Bitterroot Valley. United in pride, they march on the streets of Missoula. In traditional clothing, some are dancing while others are riding their horses without using a saddle. In contrast, the procession that took place 107 years ago might have been quiet with broken hearts: The last band of the Bitterroot Salish (or Flathead) led by Chief Charlot (or Charlo) headed to the Jocko Reservation located to the north of Missoula.

The exile resulted from the influx of white settlers who aspired to seize the majority of land, which symbolizes the history of the West. American dreams have an intimate tie to the land. After Congress created the Department of Interior in 1849, aiming at controlling both public and Indian lands, the Office of Indian Affairs was transferred from the War Department to this new government branch. Yet fights between the federal government and tribal members over land continued, often with bloodshed. During the following decade, the largest real estate transaction took place in America, and such a surge of change also crept into the Bitterroot Valley, gradually displacing Native Americans.

The valley was a part of the homeland of the Salish and Pend d'Oreille people who called the northern end of the region "sn̓p̓el̓mn̓"--the place of the Bitter Root. The vivid pink flower is native here, blooming on sunny mountain slopes in late spring, and its starchy root was an important source of nutrition for the tribal members. Lewis and Clark, though, applied the name to the entire valley during their expedition in the early 19th century. The tribal members peacefully shared room with the early settlers. They also shared beliefs, praying at St. Mary's Mission, a church founded in 1841 by Father Pierre-

Jean DeSmet and later nurtured by Father Antony Ravalli. Yet in return, what they got 2
was their eviction from the land to make room for new settlers who sought land for
agriculture.

The removal plan began in the form of the Hellgate Treaty of 1855. Western
Montana, including the valley, was then ruled by Isaac Stevens, the governor and
superintendent of Indian Affairs for Washington Territory. He intended to open up more
land by concentrating the several tribes onto a reservation 75 mile north of the Bitterroot
Valley, encouraging the Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai (or Kutenay) to share the
place. Chief Victor, the leader of the confederated tribes and the father of Charlot, refused
to relinquish control over their homeland. In negotiating, the officials promised to conduct
a survey to determine a better place for the tribal members to live, either in the Bitterroot
Valley or on the Jocko Reservation.

America was rapidly changing at that time. Dreaming of gold and success, people
rushed to California in 1860, and the first gold rush hit Montana the following year. In the
East, the Union and the Confederacy were fighting the Civil War from 1861 to 1865.

Back in the valley, Victor died in 1870. The resistance of the tribal members
continued under the new leader, Charlot, who remembered why his father hadn't left the
valley: This was where his ancestors' bones were buried. The late chief said so to General
James Garfield, who was to arrange the removal. Yet Garfield managed to implement the
treaty without Charlot's signature, but with the signatures from two sub-chiefs, Arlee and
Ninepipes. With no required survey, the new homeland was designated with an Executive
Order in 1871 issued by President Ulysses S. Grant. Some left for the reservation, and
other stayed with Charlot.

Dispute over tribal lands frequently occurred in the West because of broken
promises by the federal government. In the same year Governor Stevens approached
Victor, the governor and old Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce agreed upon the Oregon
Territory Treaty of 1855, which granted tribal ownership of the Imnaha and Wallowa

valleys in Oregon. The treaty proved short-lived. The federal government proposed a 3 revised treaty in 1863 that restricted the Nez Perce on a reservation in Idaho. Joseph refused it along with White Bird and Looking Glass, but Chief Lawyer signed, which divided the tribal people into "treaty Indians" and "non-treaty Indians." While the non-treaty Nez Perce argued to remain free on their land, Joseph died in 1872, leaving the leadership to young Joseph, known as Chief Joseph. Despite his efforts, Joseph's band too was to be on the reservation by June 14, 1877. The deadline came and went. On the following day, the Nez Perce War broke out.

During the war and on the way to Canada, Joseph and his band came to the Bitterroot Valley, asking Charlot for help. Yet Charlot offered his friend no support because of his belief that the hands of his people should not be stained with a drop of white people's blood. The band of the Nez Perce fought well until their arrival at Bear Paw Mountains, Mont., where defeat was waiting for the Nez Perce. The death toll during the 123-day war claimed the lives of old chiefs and Joseph's brother, Alokut. In his surrender speech, Joseph said, "I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stand I will fight no more, forever." He was kept on the reservation until his death in 1904 at age 60 without being allowed to see his homeland again. A legend says Joseph died of a broken heart.

Prior to the exile of the Salish, a modern force swept into western Montana. In 1883, the Northern Pacific's transcontinental railroad connected Montana to the world, boosting economic growth in the state. Mining was booming in Butte and later in Anaconda, which demanded a constant timber supply. Logging picked up speed in the Bitterroot Valley and as a result, a railroad was built between Missoula and the valley, partially taking up the allotments of the Salish with no compensation. The circumstances didn't improve for Charlot and his starving people because Congress failed to provide them appropriate funds for the removal. After the death of Arlee in 1891, Charlot finally decided to leave for the Jocko Reservation. The same year in October, the last of the Bitterroot

Salish gathered, prayed and left behind their home. The procession of sorrow passed 4
through Missoula. Charlot died at age 79 in 1910--the year that wildfires burned nearly
three million acres in the Northwest.

The land that had belonged to the Salish was put on sale. "Belying popular notions
that the Bitterroot lands were desperately needed by settlers, it took the Government about
25 years to sell off the former Salish allotments," reads in a story entitled the "Exodus of
Bitterroot Salish."

This saga of displacement is being repeated today in the valley, now called Ravalli
County, and this time, urbanization has been overriding traditional characteristics. People
are attracted to the quality of life in the last best place where the Bitterroot and Sapphire
mountain ranges run parallel to each other, presenting a pristine landscape. This is the
fastest-growing county in the state of Montana with a 38 percent population increase over
the last eight years.

This influx of people changes the natural and social landscapes. Houses have
sprung up on the land, including rich soil once used as prime agricultural land. Nearly
12,700 acres were subdivided in the last seven years, raising land values and property
taxes. The population has swelled to 35,000. As urban sprawl continues, agriculture that
was once a leading local economy has been losing ground because the place has become
too expensive to make a living by farming or ranching.

Development has increased social service demand while developers do not pay a
fair share of the infrastructure. For example, more students are in school as a result of
subdivision activities, but developers are reluctant to make any contribution for improving
school facilities. The county is short of funding. More development could be anticipated
with the expansion of a highway, but the quality of life might get shaky. Can growth be
managed with a long-term vision?

With development in one hand, preservation of nature is argued in the other. 5

Seventy-two percent of land in the valley is under the care of the U.S. Forest Service, and thus public land management has been scrutinized, especially by environmental activists. What is best for nature and wildlife is not always best for human interests. One of the issues is a grizzly bear recovery plan in the Bitterroot. Is coexistence between a grizzly bear and human possible or even needed?

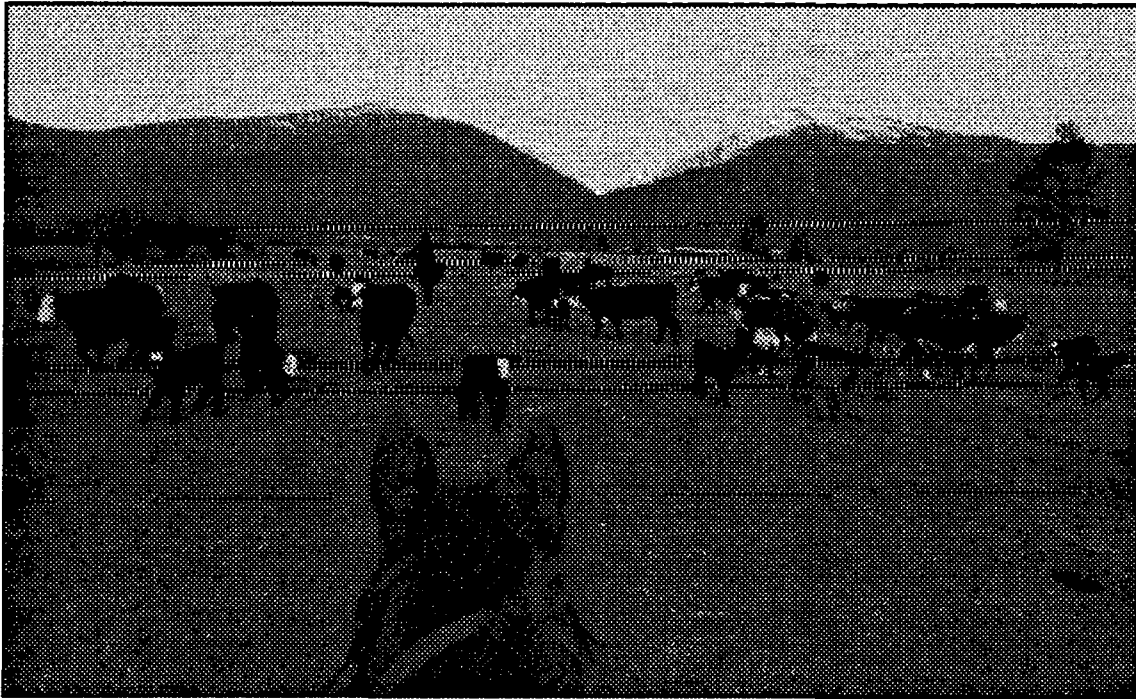
People have come to the valley in hopes their dreams would flourish. Yet in the transformation of the community, they frequently face a collision of interests over land, as the history in the West suggests. Every community member makes up an important part of the society, but each does not have an equal opportunity to make a dream come true. Whose dream should be fulfilled while dismissing others? The dozen people profiled here have striven for their dreams, dealing with challenges and obstacles in the time of a swift change. Some of their dreams are blooming; many remain unfulfilled. But all have never stop hoping.

Keep dreaming, says a man of dignity. Victor Charlo is the fourth generation descendant of Chief Victor, but he has no authorized power or hereditary status as a chief. On the June afternoon, he participates in the tribal procession to show his four children who they are. They are the Salish who carry their rich culture that is rooted in the past. To him, the Bitterroot Valley has been and will always be the home of the Salish and Pend d'Oreille people. "I believe in miracles," Charlo says. He might win a lottery to rebuild his dream in a town named after his ancestor: "I want to build a sweat lodge at Sweathouse Creek in Victor to practice the traditional rituals."

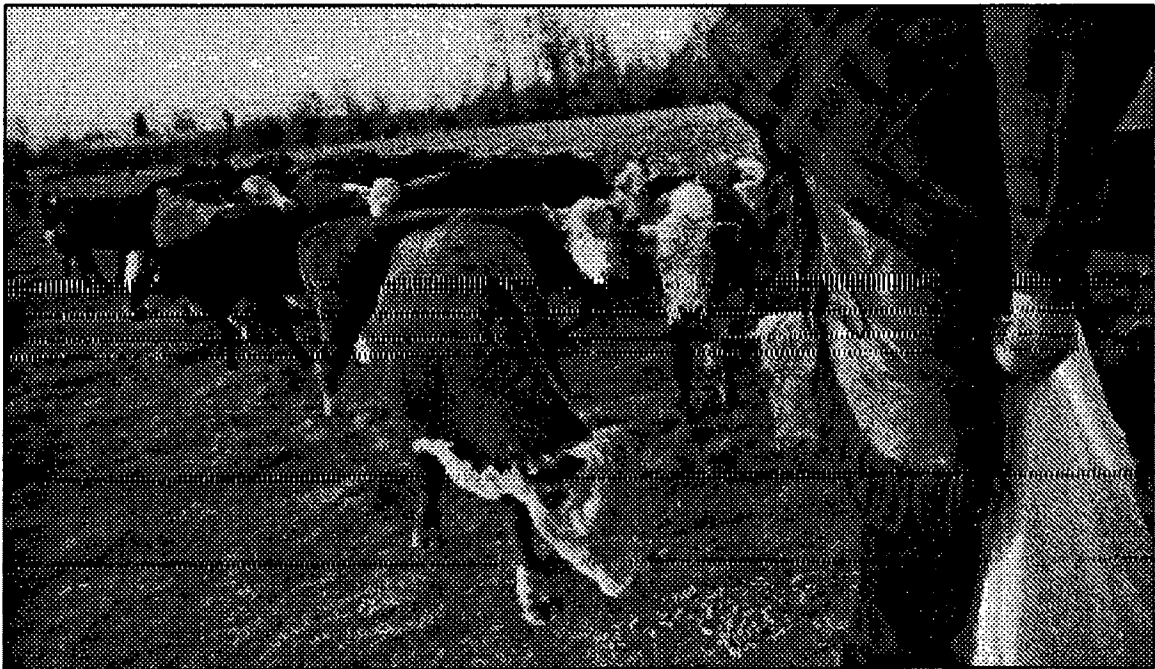
The bitterroot blossoms in due season as nature keeps her promise flourishing. The flowers bloom and glow. When time claims their short lives, they die and wait for seasons to change. In Salish culture, the first snow in the region means the beginning of winter that lasts until the first roar of thunder. Then, spring once more tells the flowers when to break

the ground. The Bitterroot Valley has embraced all inhabitants and has cherished their 6
dreams, even unfulfilled and eventually forgotten American dreams. Let the heart speak.
Let a vision emerge. And let hope swell in the valley.

bachelor cowboy carries on
family tradition







At seven o'clock in the morning, 10 deer are seen eating grass at the foot of the Bitterroot National Forest. On the 4,000-acre Ruffatto ranch, the day begins as two brothers set out for the field. One drives a pickup truck while the other deposits blocks of hay from the truck's bed. Some 90 cows rush to eat the hay, making a long line across the northern part of the ranch. Because the season is still early for grazing in the pasture, the men distribute altogether 10 tons of hay to feed 800 cows and 35 bulls each day. Starting from the end of October, feeding won't end until June when plenty of grass will have been grown for the cows to eat. "Some days, you are out there about 20 (degree) below zero and the snow is blowing. You think maybe there would be a better thing to do some place else," says Tom Ruffatto. Work on the ranch has no time-outs.

Tom and his younger brother, Cliff, are the third generation of an Italian immigrant family in the Bitterroot Valley. Their cow-calf operation, started by their grandfather Mario Feronato, has been in business for more than 90 years. With his family, Tom has taken care of the operation for 30 years after graduating from high school where he had mainly studied agriculture for their business. "Cows are just like having children. If you have them, you have a responsibility to take care of them all the time." Tom, though, has no children besides the cows. In fact, he is a bachelor cowboy who says he has had no time for marriage, and his life style won't change anytime soon, although he has a partner.

A color picture of the Feronato family taken in 1939 hangs on the kitchen wall. That was the year that electricity first lit up the valley. The photo captures the blue sky, green mountains, the house Tom now lives in, and his grandfather posing on a horse next to a herd of cattle. Feronato came to Stevensville, a town named after governor Isaac Stevens, in the late 1890s, established the core of the Feronato-Ruffatto ranch after growing sugar beets for a while. In the photo, to his distant left, four women--including

Loretta, the mother of Tom and Cliff--stand in front of a Buick. Today, the landscape 9
seems unchanged. Next to the forest, the ranch has been the place where the family work
together and nourish the dream the family strive for together. The family tradition has been
carried--up to now.

It's late April. The calf season that started in March is gradually approaching an
end. At the peak of the season, Tom, Cliff and their father, George, are out on the ranch
every few hours even at night in order not to miss any sign of trouble that cows might be
having during labor. One night at 10, twins are about to be born. But the problem is that
they are trying to come out at the same time. Tom pulls the front legs of one calf, pushing
back another's head while someone else is holding the light for him. This spring nearly
800 calves were born, which have kept him and his family from not getting enough rest.
"Do whatever it takes. You have to get up at midnight or 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. If
you don't, maybe not only a calf would die, but maybe the cow would die, too."
Occasionally death drops in. "There goes a thousand dollars. We've got to dig a hole to
bury it. When they die, we still have more work." A cow is generally valued from \$800 to
\$1,000, he says, and this season, a calf has been drowned in one of creeks running
through the ranch, despite their close attention.

Riding an 8-year-old quarter horse named Blacky, Tom checks with newly born or
sick calves as a morning routine. In one of the southern fields, he spots a calf that has
diarrhea and gets off Blacky. Hearing protective mothers' "Moos," Tom starts spinning a
rope above his head. As he manipulates the rope, the cows start moving away from him as
if ripples were spreading. Just one cast. He captures the calf by the neck. The calf is
frantically crying for help while mother is crying with grief. Although the mother shows
no attempt to attack him, he stays alert. Given medicine, the calf is set free to be united
with the mother. Tom draws in the rope and hops on Blacky, heading to another section of
the ranch.

The mountains and the ranch are getting greener day by day as buds sprout out 10 during a smooth transition from a mild winter to an early spring. The end of calf season means the beginning of irrigation time. The cows will be put on the mountainside, and the field they are now on will be plowed to grow hay. By the end of fall, about 3,000 tons of hay will be harvested to feed the cows throughout the next winter.

Grazing the cows on the mountainside has been criticized, Tom says. This land is leased from the U. S. Forest Service. Environmentalists have criticized him, saying his cows eat too much grass, leaving not enough grass for elk and deer. But that's false, he says, because his cows are doing something good for wildlife. If the cows didn't eat grass, it would get tall and coarse, which deer and elk wouldn't like. "It's better that we let the cows eat old grass off, and new grass comes up. They (wildlife) get fresh grass all the time. It's a management tool." Such argument, though, is not immediately accepted.

The same debate on grazing was heard in other places, and finally an experiment was conducted at a big-game range near Dillon, Mont., to determine if the ranchers' claim was valid. The cattle were put in certain areas, leaving the rest for wildlife. It proved that the wildlife, seeking tender grass, came to the areas where the cows grazed. It took 10 years to convince the environmentalists that the cows were helping wildlife, says Tom. He shakes his head. Book knowledge is one thing, and practical knowledge is another. Yet the practical knowledge ranchers have does not carry much weight when it comes to setting up rules or making a decision about agriculture.

In society, the louder the noise is, the more attention it gets. "It's kind of the squeaky wheel gets the grease." That's politics, he says. One such issue in the valley is the grizzly bear recovery plan in the Bitterroot ecosystem. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has proposed reintroduction of grizzly bear, and local residents have voiced strong opposition. Tom says that those who don't live in Montana write letters to decision makers, saying, "I'm in favor of reintroduction," or a wilderness club with a large

membership collects petitions to support the plan. Petitions with nearly 21,400 11
signatures were sent to the agency, and about 76.6 percent of them favored reintroduction,
according to the summary of public comments by the FWS. To some extent, "people want
Montana to be a big zoo," Tom says. "Montana is a good place to try with the Yellowstone
and Glacier national parks. And tourists' money is getting more important."

Tom neither opposes nor agrees with the reintroduction plan. He likes wildlife and
values their right to exist. What he is concerned about is coexistence between wildlife and
humans and livestock. On the Ruffatto ranch, two wolves were seen eating a dead cow,
coyotes have occasionally shown up, and a mountain lion visiting the ranch was filmed by
a CNN crew. Depredation of livestock by wildlife, including the bears, will be a problem
if it occurs. "If they don't bother me, I don't bother them. If they come and start killing
cows and calves, that's your livelihood. You can't afford it." Yet, in the decision making
process, "If you want to get elected, you have to go with the majority. Those who have the
loudest voice get the most attention. If it's agriculture, there is not enough voice. It's a
part of the democratic way. You can't agree with everything. You swallow your pride and
deal with it." And he thinks ranchers can have their moment. "The table is round, what
comes around and goes around. So one might work for you, but the next time maybe not."

In addition to wildlife, neighbors' dogs can be predatory when they are left
unattended. Dogs sometimes chase cows or kill them in the worst case scenario. Once, he
gave a warning to his new neighbors who had moved from a city after having trouble with
their dog. They chained up the dog for two weeks and eventually moved away with it. If
no peaceful solution is available, one commonly understood way might be to "shoot,
shovel and shut up."

Tom, with his brother, has carried the family tradition of ranching. Yet he thinks
agriculture is outdated because of the nature of business: endless work for a meager return
without holidays. "The next generations would think, 'Gee, why do we work seven days

a week when I can sell this land and get a five-day-a-week job?" Agriculture in America 12 generally seems unimportant. "People say, 'We can go to a grocery store and get food.' They have no concept of where food comes from."

Back in the valley, making a living in agriculture is getting more challenging as population growth takes place. Houses are built on the subdivided grounds--many of which are prime farming land--escalating property values and taxes. A farmer quits farming, and a rancher quits tending livestock. Tom sees it as a big cycle of life. "Native Americans were here. A force came and swept them away. Then, agriculture has been here for more than 100 years. Slowly another force is coming, development and the influx of people, and moving agriculture out."

A change is inevitable, he says, and what the county needs is a management device to deal with it. Vision 2020, the Ravalli County master plan, aims at maintaining the viability of agriculture, recognizing it as an important part of local culture as well as the economy. The plan itself has no regulatory nature, but it aims at drawing a framework to have ordinances in the future. "It doesn't save agriculture, but it helps to control how people subdivide." With designed growth, more operations in agriculture might be kept alive longer. "You'd like to see things developed in an orderly manner. It's just a balance--a challenge comes up and you try to plan for it, and do what you can." He has been taking an active role on the Bitterroot Conservation District for 20 years. Planning the best vision for the community members is essential, but "You can't please everybody. You really have to step on somebody's toes sometime."

Politics, though, comes down to a pragmatic factor--money. He understands most farmers don't have cash. "Everything is tied up in the land. So, as they get older, they say, 'Some day, I can divide off a little land that is worth a lot of money. I can live off selling an acre every year,'" says Tom. They can still do it, but they will face more restrictions. "It (Vision 2020) is a tool that can be changed and modified later, but you have to start it at some place."

And with the Vision 2020 planning tool, open space can be spared for deer, elk 13 and birds. During the winter, 20 to 30 deer or elk normally come to the Ruffatto ranch in search of grass. They get a share of hay for the cows. "Last winter, we saw about 140." Tom thinks urban sprawl might cost wildlife much of their winter feeding range. If no action is taken, the consequence will be helter-skelter. Tom's intention is to plan, not to keep the valley out of reach for others. "All came to America and became part of community."

Yet people have different visions, agendas and purposes of living in the valley. "When you knew everybody, people were more friendly. Some people move here from the city to be left alone." And sometimes, a new resident says something seemingly extreme to him. For example, his neighbor has opposed a plan to fix a one-lane bridge close to a campground nearby, because construction will "kill" trees. "People ran off the road and fell into the creek," says Tom. Once, another neighbor had to go into the high water to rescue two people in an up-side-down car. Otherwise, they would have been drowned. "For safety, sometimes you need to kill trees." Dealing with the public is not easy, he says. Tom would rather deal with the cows because they don't talk back.

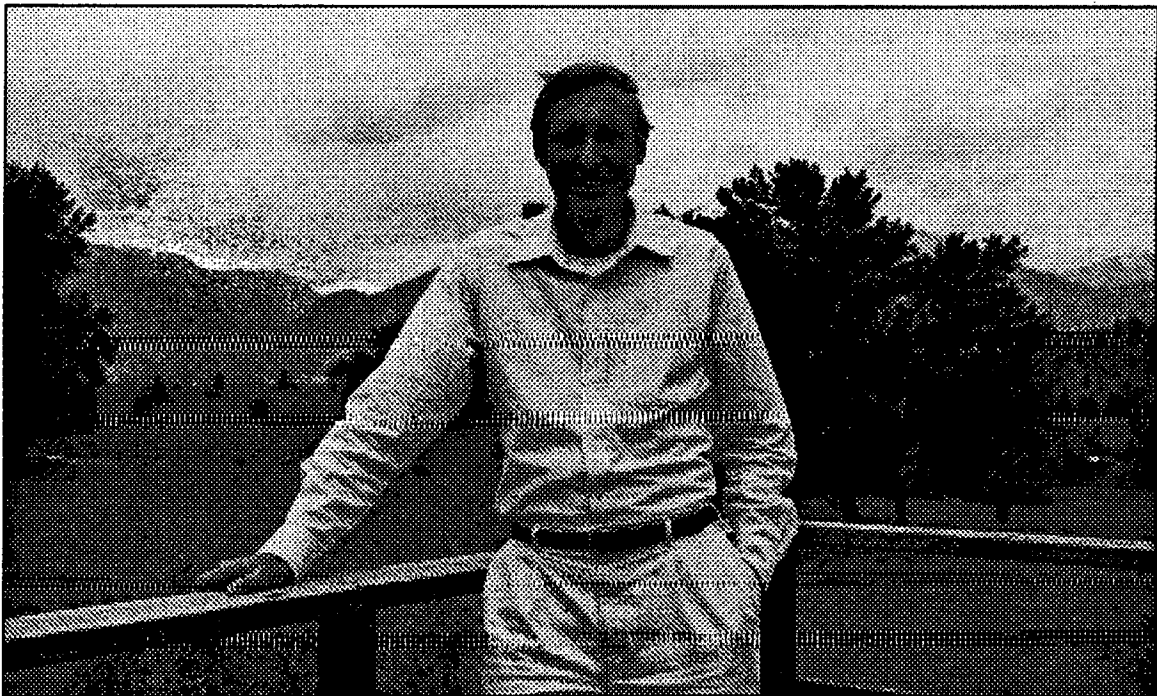
Days on the Ruffatto ranch continue to keep Tom and his family from feeling bored. "It's job security. I mean, there is always something to do." Tom, riding Blacky, and Cliff on a farm machine, exchange gestures in the distance. Tom goes to burn old left-over hay while Cliff goes to collect more leftovers. Fixing machines, welding tools and more work to be done. In addition to the cow-calf operation, Tom has diversified. He lets "city slickers" enjoy horseback riding or four-wheeler riding on the ranch, and also provides the public a restricted hunting ground, which is a part of a government project.

Yet the ranch has been and will be the center of his life. "I have a place to work every day. Kind of brain washed, but my hobby is my work." The question the Ruffattos have is who will succeed the brothers. Cliff's teen-aged sons or their nieces in college are

concerned about it, but still need time before making up their minds. Tom hopes 14
someone will follow the family tradition as ranchers, and so do many in the community.
The ranch has become an icon of the valley. "Just leave it the way it is for now," says
Tom.

Shortly before 7 p.m., Tom goes through the back door and takes off his hat and
muddy boots, before coming into the kitchen. On his forehead, a line, a cowboy-hat line,
is marked. He sits in a chair, stretching out his legs. He'll go back to the fields later, but
he now needs some rest. He is tired--but satisfied.

from growing pains comes vision



VISION 2020: Ravalli County Master Plan

Statement of Intent: The purpose of these VISION 2020 policies is to assure the promotion of the public health, safety and welfare and to promote efficiency and economy in the process of community development. These policies provide the framework upon which future regulations will be developed.

Policy 1: Property Rights

Ravalli County will protect individual property rights in accord with the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Montana.

Policy 2: Agriculture

Foster the continued viability of agriculture in the Bitterroot Valley by helping to protect agricultural land and irrigation systems and supporting agricultural practices.

Policy 3: High Impact Land Use

Ensure that new high-impact development is compatible with the surrounding area by adopting development standards that address issues such as location, traffic, pollution or other potential impacts.

Policy 4: Highway Corridors

Ensure appropriate land development along highway corridors by adopting land use plans that consolidate new development at appropriate locations, minimize hazards to safety and ensure compatibility with the area.

Policy 5: Residential Lot Sizes

In existing neighborhoods where the average size of the lots is less than twenty acres, the average size of new lots should be consistent with the average size of the existing lots. In areas where the average size of the existing lots is twenty acres and greater, review subdivision proposals on a case-by-case basis according to the most current Ravalli County Subdivision regulations.

Policy 6: Neighborhood Character

Maintain or enhance community character by assisting citizen advisory committees to develop community plans and voluntary zoning districts.

Policy 7: Surface Water

Protect riparian areas by establishing appropriate setbacks from rivers, streams, and wetlands.

Policy 8: Air and Groundwater

Maintain a healthy environment by protecting air quality and the quantity and quality of existing water uses.

Policy 9: Adequate Public Infrastructure

Require new development to pay its fair share of the costs to provide adequate public infrastructure.

Policy 10: Implementation

Encourage and facilitate public participation to develop each regulation to implement the VISION 2020 policies.

Policy 11: Master Plan Amendments

Amend the Master Plan as needed to reflect changing circumstances.

Kirk Thompson has a great view. From his living room, he can see the Bitterroot National Forest, where he worked until last year. For 50 to 100 miles west, there is no obstruction. Most mountain areas are wilderness, he says. Through a wet June, the region has added a darker shade of green, but still, one peak in the farthest distance is snow capped.

The picturesque landscape, the clean air and water, and some of the mildest climate in Montana attracts people. The population of Ravalli County increased 32.6 percent during the past seven years. But having such superb elements is a mixed blessing because growth has caused adverse impacts on the quality of life here.

Subdivision is one of the main concerns in the valley where rapid development has been taking place. Thompson, the president of the Ravalli County Planning Board this year, is going to view a proposed subdivision before a committee meeting tonight. On the dining table, there is a thick envelope stuffed with documents for just one proposal.

"We have two meetings every month just to deal with subdivisions in the valley because so much subdivision activity is going on," he says. During the last seven years, more than 1,400 acres were proposed for subdivisions. At the meeting, a recommendation for approval or disapproval will be made by the board members to the county commissioners, and often, the recommendation is overturned by the commissioners.

Before it gets too late to control sprawl, something has to be done. Many members of the community share such feelings. Including Thompson, 15 appointed volunteers who have collectively lived in the valley for over 350 years, have taken a leadership role to draw a blueprint.

"I would simply like to try to help the community deal with problems we all face, we all share, and try to be constructive in the way we deal with it in terms of making a better place to live and being fair to all people," says Thompson.

Serving on the board for four years, Thompson has striven to enact an elaborate 18 land use plan called Vision 2020. "Choices we make (today) will affect our lives in the future." A man of vision hopes the community will have a long-term plan without further delay.

In fact, the county has already laid out a plan. The 1981 comprehensive plan was adopted by the three county commissioners, but has been left untouched and has become out of date while no action has been taken. Then five years ago, the board members and the Ravalli County Planning officers started working on an up-dated master plan that recognized the existing conditions in the valley. The detailed and lengthy document was highly technical, according to county planner Kevin McDonald, and lacked adequate planning policies on land use. It was thought to be difficult for the public to grasp the whole content.

"It wasn't even feasible or reasonable to put this kind of document on a ballot because people wouldn't read it. It's unfair to ask them to vote on something they couldn't reasonably read or we couldn't really reasonably expect them to read," says Thompson.

So, last year in October, the board and the officials launched a new approach with a master plan that could win the public support. The extensive document was boiled down to its essential components. Planner McDonald literally put words together, reflecting comments from all parties as well as revising a draft countless times.

The original draft stated only seven policies--such as residential lot sizes, highway corridors, air and water quality--but four policies, including one for amendments, were added to it during the public comment process. Every time a survey or public hearing was held, the number of policies increased, one by one. Vision 2020 now has 11 policies in the four-page final draft.

"I'm not personally in favor of government trying to plan, in the sense of 'plan

and direct' things. My main concern is that government protect people from the harmful 19 actions of others," says Thompson.

If a harmful action is obvious, such as terminating someone's life or stealing others' belongings, it's easy for people to agree on rules, Thompson thinks. But when it comes to issues of land use, it's nearly impossible to achieve a consensus of opinion.

"A lot of people see any kind of government regulation as reducing their freedom. There always has to be a balance between community-at-large versus the individual. And we are always questioning, always seeking where the proper balance is. Sheer growth creates more problems and causes the community to reassess where they want that balance."

Someone's freedom to subdivide land can be a financial burden for someone else. Houses are built on subdivided property to bring in people to the region where many roads are still unpaved.

"As you get more people driving down these dirt roads, you get enormous quantities of dust in the air, which lowers the air quality," says Thompson. The consequence would be to pave the road at the expenses of the taxpayers whereas the developers are free from paying any share of the public services because of the lack of regulations.

"My principles are that people should pay for their own impacts, and not expect other people to subsidize their developments, and what one person does to the land should not hurt neighbors."

The irrigation system is another example, he says. "It runs through one person's property to irrigate somebody else's property. Then you start to subdivide land, bring in people who don't understand the way the system works." Some have attempted to take water out of ditches or have tried to block ranchers from maintaining the ditches. The board has sought to find ways to limit adverse effects on agriculture, he says.

To figure out the proper balance, impacts resulting from growth need to be understood and estimated in advance. 20

"It is difficult to assess impacts. The problem is that impacts tend to be cumulative. The impact of one new house is so small that you can't measure it." But eventually, it would become apparent with 100 newly built houses.

"But who causes the impacts? What's a fair way to deal with that? Those are difficult questions to deal with. I don't find them easy at all."

As the first step for solving this problem, Vision 2020 includes a policy that aims to minimize taxpayers' share in growth by requiring that "new development pays its fair share of the costs to provide adequate public infrastructure."

In mid-June, a grocery store with 85 local employees opened near a busy junction where only a yellow blinking light alerts the drivers on highway. Along with the existing business around the junction, the store has parking for approximately 300 vehicles. Traffic congestion is bound to increase.

The county planning office has the ability to conduct environmental assessment, but received no request to do so from the commissioners. County planner Mike Cavanaugh wishes the office could have had the ability to put the facility at the junction under review for public safety, instead of merely making recommendations to the Montana Department of Transportation, which was in charge of making the decision.

There is talk about improving the junction, according to Jim Weaver, District Supervisor of the MDOT, but there is no plan for it to be carried out immediately. The expansion of the highway comes first. Even when the decision is made to install traffic lights, the money might be sought from taxpayers, whereas the stores around the junction are not assessed for the construction fee.

"I don't want to see any more regulation," Thompson says. "If possible, I would rather see more freedom. I don't want to see the strong taking advantage of the weak...that's why we have to find the balance."

Vision 2020 could help developers do better planning. For example, an eye-catching electric billboard close to the same intersection has raised concerns about safety on the highway. The board flashes information, such as date, time, temperature and today's good buys at the grocery store for drivers to read when they should be paying attention to the traffic. If a car is moving at 60 mph, a driver has too little time to finish reading the prices of groceries. 21

Thompson says what usually occurs in the valley is what he calls "subdivision." In contrast, he sees the construction of the Stock Farm LLC, a community with a world-class golf course, as something better.

"They've done what I call 'development,' which is they are putting in all the infrastructure, the water system, the sewer system, good roads." The community targets wealthy buyers who can afford to pay, for example, at least a quarter million dollars for a residential lot.

"A lot of people resent Stock Farm because they resent rich people coming in...But Stock Farm does several good things for the valley, too. First of all, it protected a lot of land with a large conservation easement, otherwise it might have not been protected," says Thompson.

Out of 2,600 acres, approximately 2,200 acres are left untouched.

"What they are trying to sell is a very beautiful, high quality of life. In order to sell that, they had to protect all the land around the development, so people would find it very desirable."

Also, the county could get financial benefits from the development, Thompson thinks. "Probably they (the residents) are not living here full time. That development will bring in probably far more tax dollars to the county than it costs in services. So it's a totally different thing from the typical subdivision in the county where new people come in and normally put more demand on county services than they pay in taxes. The Stock Farm is just the reverse."

Yet he adds that any change, including subdivision and well designed development, has impacts on the environment. "We have to recognize that any subdivision, any growth ultimately detracts some of the values in the valley." And he hopes Vision 2020 could minimize degradation of the valley's quality of life. 22

After Vision 2020 was submitted to the county commissioners, a public hearing held in mid-June drew a turnout of 150 people. Outcries of opposition and passionate calls for adoption were all heard in public testimony that lasted more than three hours. Thompson, in the audience, listened to all concerns.

"I'm particularly interested in hearing those who oppose it. Why do they oppose it?" He is willing to understand all phases of the problems in order to arrive at the best solution.

Private property rights were the major concern for those who opposed the plan at the public hearing. "People are concerned that somehow, through Vision 2020 policy statements, government will adopt more regulations that you can not subdivide your property, or that you can only subdivide your property in 20-acre lots."

Thompson understands that people fear changes that regulations might cause. "But that is not what it intends. (Vision) 2020 does not have anything that is regulatory in nature. It doesn't do anything unless the county government passes regulations to deal with the issues."

Even if Vision 2020 is adopted, it still takes more before the regulations can go into effect. The county has to work with Vision 2020 within the scope of the federal constitution, state and local laws. "That could be a year away, two years away or could be never depending on what the commissioners do."

And what if it were rejected, what would happen?

"I don't even speculate as to what would happen if it were denied. I guess it's hard for me to conceive that people who live here do not want clean air and water, do not want

subdividers to pay their own way, don't want to see agriculture protected, don't want to see the stream bank protected."

23

Last February, upon the board's request, the planning office conducted a scientific survey of the draft, then with seven policies. More than 80 percent of the sample population who returned the questionnaire supported Vision 2020.

"The longer you delay dealing with problems, (and the) more changes you have to make, the worse it is to deal with later." Although the problems associated with growth started being seen years ago, Thompson thinks people have kept putting off taking action. "Probably, we are overdue."

But it is time to bring about desirable changes to the community and especially to those who had to deal with problems without substantial help from the county.

"We forced each school district to struggle with growth, trying to pass their bond issues, with the need for more classroom space." It is often the case that developers make no contribution to schools when asked during the subdivision procedure, although their development is likely to bring more children into school. Likewise, the fire department and sheriff's office have tried their best with what's been available.

"I mean money is usually the bottom line of all problems. In fact, the whole thing on property rights that people bring up, they are really concerned over their money and they see government regulation may restrict what can be done with their property, which would affect the value of their property. It's mainly a money issue. They use the term, 'property rights.'"

Through public input, including the June public hearing and discussions that the Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce requested at a late stage on planning process, the draft was amended and made public at a meeting on Aug. 5, the final day for the commissioners to put the issue on the November ballot. A new addition is Policy No. 1 that assures individual property right protection.

with 11 policies. Yet only the citizens who live in the unincorporated areas in the county can vote. And if it is approved, the 1981 comprehensive plan will be amended to make it consistent with the policies.

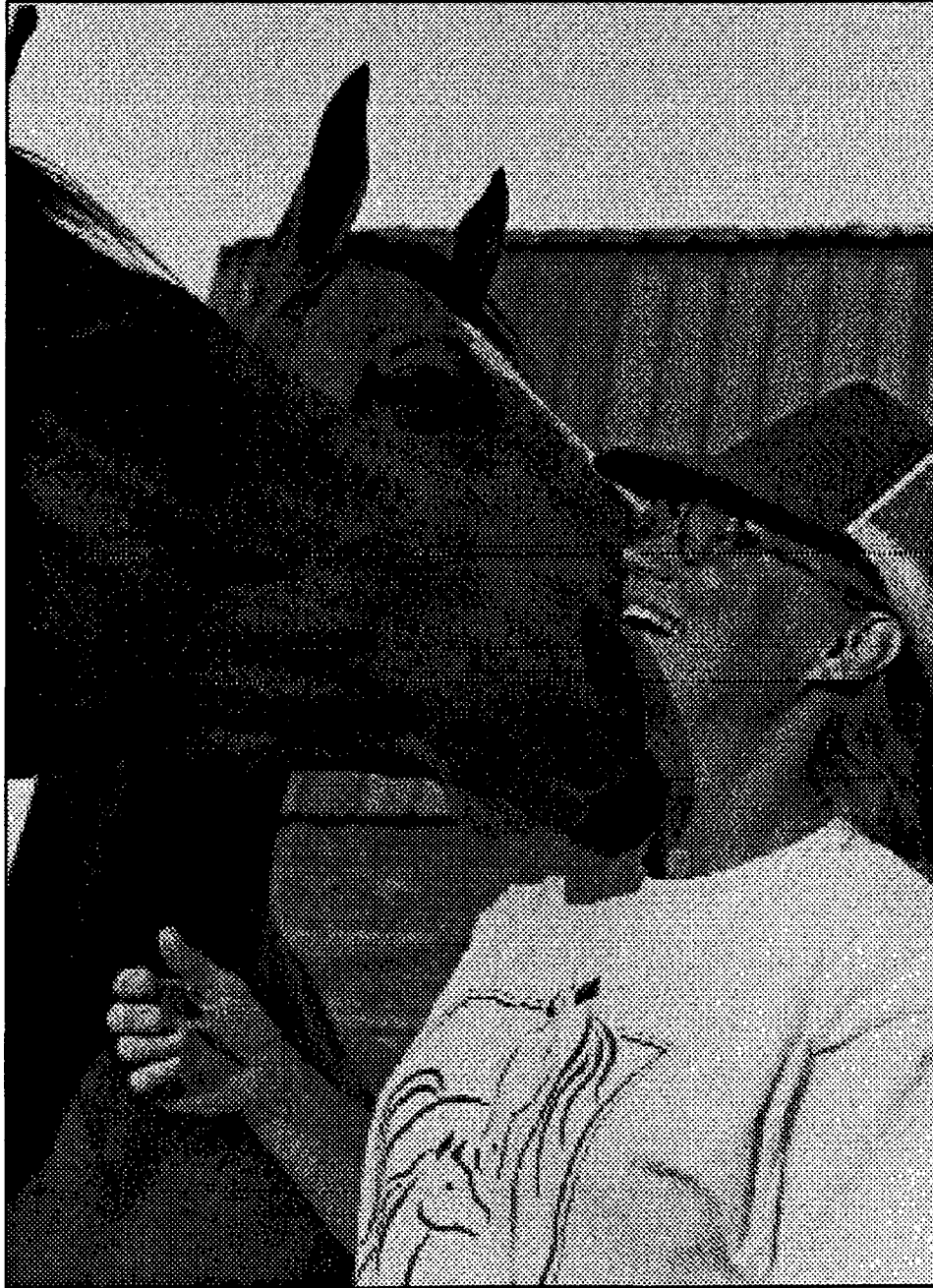
Thompson thinks that during the whole process more people have become aware of the problems resulting from growth in the valley and hopes to see people paying more attention to the issues in the community.

"What we do will make a difference, good or bad. People need to choose intelligently and responsibly." All choices, though, generally have both good and bad aspects, he adds, "because the choices that lead us to some good results for the community as a whole might be seen as restrictive for some individuals who want to do something otherwise. That's why we have to balance these things all the time."

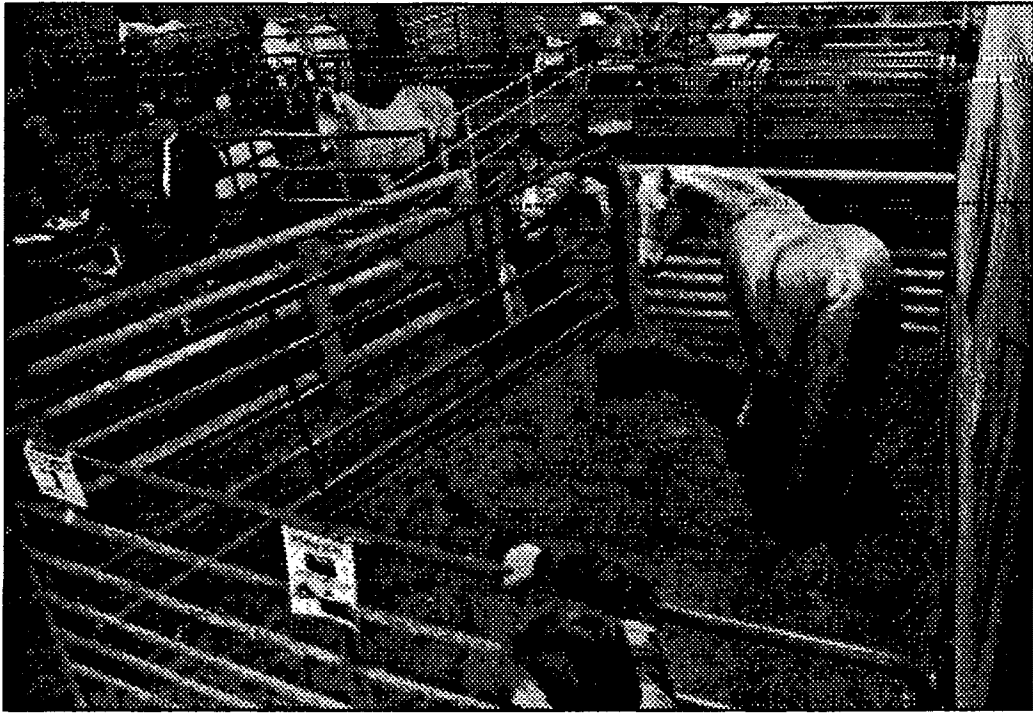
And he believes having a good plan will help the community maintain a good balance. "The problems people see today will be lessened by allowing the planning of the future." At the critical time of change, Vision 2020 is waiting for a decision in November.

Postscript: Vision 2020 was rejected.

going once, going twice...









Inside the dusty "Diamond A Arena," most people wear blue jeans, especially Wranglers. Wrangler jeans are tough and have relatively wide leg openings that can easily go over cowboy boots. Here, a sign on each restroom door defines one's identity as either a cowboy or cowgirl.

Horses frequently neigh from excitement or uneasiness. Each stud is in its corral, and some more are coming in. "Look out for horses, " says a female staff dressed in a red shirt and black Wranglers. The 18th Annual Bitterroot Mountettes All Breed Stallion Service Auction is about to begin.

An auctioneer, of course wearing an elegant black cowboy hat, takes a microphone on the stage. After welcoming the crowd of more than 500 people, he is proud to present the first stallion among 38 to walk into the center arena. "Sierra's Alibi!" The 4-year-old quarter horse enters, accompanied by his master, Rockey Lynn. This is his second time, but the 18th for his master to come to the auction.

The name of the stud declares his roots. Sierra's lineage is extolled. His sire is Sierra Mount, whose father is Sierra G. Son. Alibi's lineage runs through his vein, too. His dam is Doc's Perfect Alibi, whose father is Professor's Alibi. So, when these two lines came together, a colt was named Sierra's Alibi. He is handsome, and by the arrival of mating season in spring, his mane and tail shine gold in the sun.

Rockey's wife, Betty, looks over the crowd, listening to the incessant loud voice from the speakers. In her heart, her affection for horses has never run out. "From the time I was a little, all I ever wanted to be was a rancher," says Betty. She grew up with horses on a ranch in Michigan and was crowned the Sparta Rodeo Queen in Sparta. In a newspaper clip, teen-aged Betty and President Ford, then a representative of Michigan, smile together.

The auctioneer raises the price, exchanging gestures with buyers who lift their 27 hands or register cards, or who nod in agreement. Going once, going twice and "Three hundred dollars, sold!" He declares the price for Sierra's Alibi's semen.

Betty met Idaho native Rockey in the Bitterroot Valley. When the two married 20 years ago, they launched a horse breeding operation with a stallion and three mares. On their ranch in Corvallis, they now have three studs, 19 mares and their foals .

"I admire everything about them. I like the shape of their eyes, the shape of their jaws, where the ears are and the soft little noses." Patting the muzzle of an almost 1-year-old filly, Betty says, "This is my baby." Eleven foals were born and nine more to come this spring. Today, a mare whose due date came and went a few days ago is brought to a paddock from a field to be given close attention. Sometimes something goes wrong. A foal should be born within 15 minutes from start to finish, says Betty. If it takes longer, a veterinarian should be called in. "We have to make a lot of life-and-death decisions."

Not long ago, something went awfully wrong on the ranch. A handsome colt was born, but five hours later, it became motherless. The mother got a twisted intestine, which the veterinarian couldn't do anything about except to put her to sleep. "She was a nice mare," says Betty. The death toll during a foaling season is high: one mare per week. The veterinarian told her so. One out of 25 mares dies, says the veterinarian, Dick Richardson, who works in the Bitterroot and Missoula areas. Last year, after hard labor, one mare underwent surgery to live, which cost Betty and Rocky \$2,500. But life is priceless.

Betty has been the mother of the orphaned colt, named Legacy for now, for three weeks, feeding him a quart of formula milk from a bottle every few hours day and night. As the name of milk, "Grow-N-Glow," suggests, Legacy is fast growing. But sometimes, Betty thinks he has too much milk within a short period of time. These days, she could leave milk in a bucket for the night, but when he had a gallon of milk within four hours,

she got alarmed. A foal can't throw up and can drop ill. "They (foals) are very fragile." Legacy was fine. 28

Quarter horses are generally bred to be cattle horses, says Betty. Stop, back up and turn. A horse is trained to work around cows and to cut a cow from the herd. Sierra's Alibi has learned to follow cows in open fields in Idaho. Yet they can be race horses like thoroughbreds. Los Alamitos Race Course in Cypress, Calif., is known as the premier track for quarter horse races, holding nearly 1,000 races last year with an average purse of more than \$1 million each night.

On the ranch, a seemingly albino colt is running through bushes and passing by a water tank and a black goat. It is said the top speed of a quarter horse lasts for a quarter of a mile. Looking at the colt, Betty recalls the childhood of its sire. Sierra's Alibi looked just like the colt before he changed his fuzzy baby hair. "He really sheds off to a dark golden, (nearly orange) color, in the spring," she wrote in the auction pamphlet.

The colt, growing yellowish hair around his curious eyes, is in the care of his blind mother, Red Heart, who suffered leptospirosis that might have caused the loss of her vision, according to Betty. Red Heart walks towards the direction her colt is running, not bumping into a parked Ford pickup. When her son is gone beyond the reach of her senses, she neighs, looking for a response from him. The son is now tired and lying down on the grass where the mother stands.

Sierra's Alibi has work to do this evening when the temperature cools down. Because no artificial insemination is done here, he needs to get a mare bred in the traditional way with the assistance of Betty and Rockey.

Over a fence, he kisses an Arabian mare and puts his nose on her neck. This 18-year-old mare has never had a foal. She neighs baring her teeth, shaking her head and kicking the ground with her front leg, raising clouds of dust. Her tail, bound with a bandage, swings around.

Horse tail hair is coarse. Years ago, Sierra G. Son, the grandfather of Sierra's 29 Alibi, got injured when a mare's tail was tangled with his penis while he was trying to breed the mare. He got a "v-shape" cut that looked like a burst open sausage over-cooked in a microwave, according to Betty. She made an emergency call to a veterinarian who was then using the answering service, and the message from Betty was rather shocking to the operator. The veterinarian was told, "You wouldn't believe this," but he said to the operator, "Go ahead and tell me. I can believe anything." Anything could happen, says Betty. It was so swollen that "he couldn't put it back." The cut needed more than one stitch and bothered him for a year. So, Betty wraps mares' tails before breeding and unwraps them afterwards. One breeder left a mare's tail wrapped for a long time, and the tail fell off as a result. "Isn't that awful?" Betty says, laughing.

The preparation is complete, but the Arabian mare is not in the mood. "Too old, too fat and ill mannered." The owner of the horse wants them to try it anyway. Rockey takes the stallion back to his paddock. They don't force her if she refuses. They wait until the time is right, which means the mare will stay on the ranch for a while. If a mare isn't calm, she might hurt the stud by kicking. Once their \$5,000 stud was injured by a mare for a \$300 breeding, which limited his ability to produce enough semen for impregnation.

The breeding needs to be done in time with Mother Nature. A mare has to be in heat, which won't occur by merely standing next to a stud at a breeding chute. "They have a regular cycle where they are in heat for a week, out of heat for two weeks in general. You are not going to breed her during those two weeks." Being out of heat means having neither an egg to conceive nor interest in a stud.

A cycle starts when spring arrives. "Mother Nature provides that they have a cycle because you don't want a baby to be born in the middle of the winter," says Betty. "In the winter time, it's dark. Mares don't start cycling until there is more light. So, to fool a mare to create a cycle, breeders put her in a barn and turn lights on in the morning. I don't do that. I try to stay more with her nature." A mare usually has one egg. Once she comes

in heat, she and one of three studs work together every other day because sperm lives 30 in her body for 48 hours. She will get pregnant when her egg comes down on the last day of heat.

A question is, how Betty and Rockey figure out if she is in heat or out.

One way is to observe mares introduced to a stud. "He talks to them, smells them, licks them and kisses them...Usually, they lift their tails and urinate a lot if they are ready for a stallion." And then, "He kind of makes love to them and breeds them." This didn't happen to the Arabian mare today.

Another way is to get a clue from a stud. "A mare seems in heat to me, but he goes in there, stands around and looks 'moony.' He doesn't act like she smells good."

Although Betty puts his nose on a mare, he responds to Betty as if to say, "Oh, I don't know, I don't think she is right, I don't think I want to," she explains. "Absolutely nothing you can do about that, if he doesn't want to. That's it."

When Betty receives mixed signals from a mare, such as baring her teeth, but lifting her tail and urinating a lot, she goes along with the stud's decision. "I have pretty good communications with stallions. I take what he is telling me. The stud knows."

A veteran stud named Snipper Music knows a lot. He is 16 years old and the father of about 140 foals, including Legacy. The stud observes what's happening on the ranch and has knocked down a fence out of jealousy. He also knows he can get a bucket of oats only after he is done with his work. During a pasture breeding, meaning a pair are put in a corral for a long time, he tried to breed a mare in front of Betty when she brought a bucket of oats for the mare in the morning. "He came back to me. 'Where is my bucket of oats? I did my part. Where is mine?'" She suspects he did nothing when nobody was around.

One acre for each horse is the standard in the valley, says Betty, because of the rich soil that can grow enough grass to feed one. They raise 35 cow-calf pairs and about 60

horses, including mares that are brought here for breeding. The ranch became 75 acres after they purchased 50 acres five years ago.

31

"We are lucky. The only reason we could afford it was because it wouldn't hurt (the land). You can't build a house over there because you can't put in a septic system. So, we got it for half of what we should have paid for the land that you can put houses on." And this way, they can enjoy the spacious view. "When people come in and pay big prices for the land, they are going to ruin people who have lived here all their lives. You can't afford to buy land in your own area."

Rockey works as a full-time carpenter while Betty runs the ranch with a female worker who helps her in the morning. "His money has to go support all these animals, and we sell a group of them every year, which pays for their hay." Something always comes up. Besides medical fees for horses or fees for fixing fences, they have spent \$1,000 on tarps to cover haystacks. "In Montana, it's so dry and you don't have to do that. But for two years, it rained, it rained and it snowed and rained until our hay was ruined." They spent \$20,000 on hay and 70 percent of it was rotten because of too much moisture. "A lot of people come to the Bitterroot Valley with money and leave broke," she declares.

Rockey can "cowboy-up," says Betty. The term is a complement for those who can do impossible things, including breaking wild horses, fixing everything and handling physically demanding labor on a ranch. "You don't get any rest. If they (cowboys) get hurt, they just ignore it," says Betty. "It's a shame if you put horses ahead of your husband. If Rockey gets sick, he won't go to a doctor. Just cowboys up."

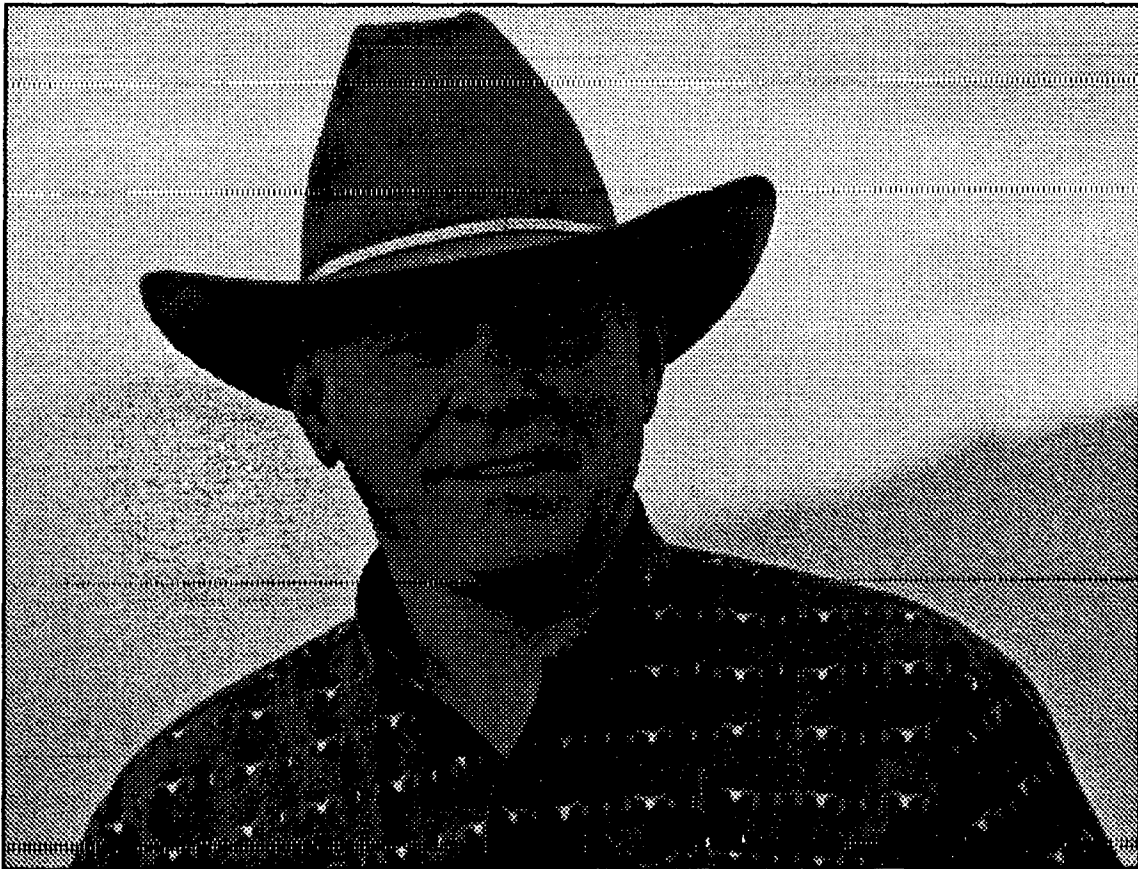
A rodeo cowboy, though, is different from a ranch cowboy, she adds. "I admire them, even love them, but don't want to live with them. They don't work, they live for rodeos and always get hurt." Betty recalls the days she would enjoy spending time with those cowboys at a rodeo. Back then, she used to participate in barrel-racing. Her valiant image is captured in a 1984 photo hanging on the living room wall: Betty and Rockey's black stallion were racing as one.

Rockey is the kind of cowboy she wants to raise horses with on the ranch. "I found a good one." He drives a Ford pickup that has a sign, "Thoroughbred," on the door. They needed a truck eight years ago, and the one Betty liked happened to have the logo. It was meant to be, she thinks. 32

By now, they have tried to get two mares bred by the youngest stud and are done with feeding horses. It's about 8:30 p.m. The sun is lowering in the western sky.

Betty and Rockey continue to breed horses on the ranch. Next year, Sierra's Alibi will go back to the auction with a rookie stallion, a brother of Legacy. The son of Sierra's Alibi might make an appearance at the center arena some day. And one day, their stallion might earn the highest bidding at the auction, exceeding this year's record. Going once, going twice and "Six hundred and twenty-five dollars, sold!"

rancher hangs on



His mission has been to support his family. Yet the way he chose to carry it out in the valley might have been a double-edged sword to start with. His attempt has been mixed with success and failure, but now he might be losing the battle.

"When we came over here, my wife and I thought probably our property value would double in the next 15 to 20 years," says rancher Steve Christensen. "We bought this place for an investment."

Utah native Christensen used to run a cow-calf operation on a 1,000-acre ranch in Idaho and leased 20,000 acres as an allotment management operated with two other ranchers in Idaho. In summer, he would ride a horse, starting at daybreak, and push 300 head of cattle for 15 miles a day, a few times a week. Numerous injuries in the legs and knees have never encouraged him to turn his back on ranching.

But he was getting old, getting tired and wasn't generating much profit.

His wife, Lynne, once lived in the Bitterroot Valley when she was young and liked the region. So, nine years ago, the couple and their two sons moved to the valley where he thought he could continue to run his business for a long time, possibly until his retirement. This time, he started out with a small operation on a 200-acre ranch with 175 cows. Unlike an immense ranch under the big sky of the eastern Montana, the average farm here is about a 260-acre operation with intensive land use. Christensen thought he could make it.

As they anticipated, the value of land doubled. Yet it was rather too fast for him to be content with. Why? He made a good investment in land, knowing that he was going to sell the land some day, didn't he?

The answer comes from the heart which tells him what matters in his life. He has to stay on the ranch to be with himself, tending cows and raising hay, as long as his physical strength allows him to. That, he loves. However, he might not be able to

afford to continue for long in the valley. Urban sprawl in the region has cast a shadow 35
over his efforts.

Christensen had two neighboring houses and a better view of the Bitterroot mountain range when he moved. But now he feels he is pinched in. A dozen houses have sprung up and one more is under construction in the neighborhood. "The taxes have kept going up every year, every time someone put a home next to us." Continuous development has resulted in raising the land value and the property taxes, what the county officials call a "double whammy," according to county administrative officer B. Daniel Cox.

"I don't like to live looking at somebody else's back window," says Christensen. "I wasn't raised that way. I'd like to have my house alone." But circumstances wouldn't leave him alone. His land and his dream of tending cows in the valley have been diminishing. "For my business, it's dying out here. I'm probably going to end up selling."

Christensen admits he miscalculated changes in the community as well as changes in expenses for his business. The power bill has increased; so has the fertilizer bill. "Boy, that keeps getting bad. We way underestimated our expenses here." Using sprinklers costs him \$15 per acre for this year while getting water from irrigation ditches costs him \$13.50 per acre. And regardless of the costs of his operation, the prices in the beef market have gone down. The price per 100 pounds was \$74.6 in 1990, but it was \$58.7 in 1996, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In the case of calves, the price dropped nearly \$40 during the period from 1991 to 1996. Christensen can't get enough money from the cows to make ends meet.

Every rancher has a different break-even point depending on the size and manner of an operation. He says a general rule is "the bigger the better." This means a rancher can generate more profit by running a big operation than a small one.

"When I look back to the late '70s, it was easier to make money then because 36 cattle were in 60 or 70 cents per pound, but the break-even point on my cows was like 40 cents (per pound). Today, I'm getting 75 or 80 cents per pound, but my break-even is 85 cents."

His situation didn't improve by merely his realizing what had gone wrong. He had to come up with money to pay the bills, and he found a solution in the land. "We sold chunks here, chunks there. We made a lot of money just by selling our property." He too started subdividing land to support his family.

Bare land in the county is valued at somewhere between \$5,000 to \$10,000 per acre, according to the latest figures by Ravalli County extension office. The market has exceeded the point where most new livestock operations at today's land values can generate profit to support a family while making land payments at the same time.

During the past two years, Christensen sold 175 acres out of 200 acres. "We didn't want to sell our cows and I didn't want to sell our property because that's what I knew and I love to do. But I had no choice." Subdivision is a way to get quick cash. "People are doing what I'm doing, selling off a piece here and a piece there to put homes on."

He wonders himself why he still wants to run the business despite the odds and the fact that he can make big money by selling his property. "Why don't I just quit? I can retire for the rest of my life by selling off the property, but I don't want to do that. I like what I do. I'll keep raising a few cows here, a few cows there, losing money, but I like doing it. That sounds kind of stupid, doesn't it? How can it be so bad, and you still like and keep doing it?"

His passion for the land has its roots. In high school while still working on a farm as a part timer, he set aside his boyhood dream of becoming a rancher or farmer and studied to be a chemical engineer. In his senior year, he realized what he loved with his whole heart, and it was not in an office, but it was on land that he wanted to be. Ever since, he has taken care of cows in the snow, in the rain and in the summer sun.

"We (ranchers) love to do it because we love to see things grow. We love to 37
smell the fresh air in the morning. We'd like to go out and we'd like to see plants blossom
and make crops. We love to feed America. That's what it is."

Growing up in the 1950s, he recalls the typical American dream of owning a car
and a house with a big yard. "That was what we thought about and that was for real. You
work hard, and you can walk up the ladder. But today, that's not possible. These places
cost so much money. You walk up a way to be something in this country, but it gets very
difficult...You don't make a lot of money in this business. You enjoy what you do, where
you live. Enjoy freedom. You have no bosses."

Beyond the valley, he has seen changes that are often synonymous with challenges
in agriculture. Worldwide competition has gotten more intense, he thinks.

"I looked at NAFTA, the free trade agreement, you know. It hurt agriculture, but
helped technological aspects in our country. When we want to compete in the world
market, what happens? We have to lower the price of our product to be competitive.
What's going to happen next? You're going to see a tremendous turmoil in agriculture in
the next three to five years."

Ranchers don't have enough time to get into the political fight because of
demanding labor around the clock, says Christensen. Instead, they have a local stock
organization and a lobbying group that speaks up for them in Washington D.C. He has
also made two trips to the nation's capital in hopes of publicizing agriculture in Montana.
What happened on the streets was funny, he recalls. People stopped to ask a question of
Christensen and his fellow ranchers. "Are you real cowboys?" Wearing regular suits was
normal, but elegant suede cowboy hats and tough-looking cowboy boots stood out on the
streets.

Their appearances in town drew attention, but not among politicians. The

trips made him feel nothing but powerless. "I was pretty discouraged." Many small ranchers and farmers in America will be squeezed out of the market and land, he thinks. 38

Agriculture is a part of the political game that boils down to votes and fund-raising, Christensen thinks. He'd like to see a politician who would stand up and say, "Hey, I'll represent the people in my district," instead of passing bills for big financial contributors. But everything is "very complicated... You get hung up in politics. We only want to be self-sufficient. It's getting to the point that the government wants us to depend on them." Through regulations and policies issued from the capital, a rancher like Christensen could be out of business.

Yet no matter how hard it is to make ends meet, he will never change his philosophy about one thing. "We (ranchers) are proud people. We don't like government subsidies." What they need is compensation for their product. If his luck in agriculture runs out, he says he would rather work at Wal-Mart than take the subsidies.

He thinks ranchers who actually take care of land, crops or animals have gone out of fashion in America. According to U.S. Census Bureau, the average age of farm operators was 52 years old in 1987 and it went up to 53.3 years old in 1992. "What does it tell you? Young people are not coming into our business, and we are losing more ranchers and farmers every year. We are not totally going out of the production, just the big outfits get bigger. Pretty soon, we'll have nothing but huge, huge farms and ranches that'll be owned by a huge company." Multicorporations dominate the market, and politicians seem to be happy as long as they can keep food inexpensive, he thinks.

As he goes through the hardship of raising cows, he has found another way to support his family. He got into a livestock brokering and consulting business to make up for the loss on cows. It is a survival skill for Christensen to diversify his business using knowledge he had gained from 35 years of experiences in agriculture. "If you are not

capable of changing, because of your land values or other circumstances, you can just 39
all of a sudden wake up in the morning and you don't have anything."

In the valley, more than half of the 900 farmers seek the majority of their income from other occupations, according to the Ravalli County extension office. Including the county commissioners, many think agriculture still is important to the local economy and culture. To save agriculture, the county has tried to establish a way to control growth by adopting a master plan. With the help of the county planning office and board, the commissioners documented the comprehensive master plan for Ravalli County, entitled Vision 2020, and will put it on the November ballot.

Yet Christensen has a different view. "It's too late." He thinks the only way to bring agriculture back to life in the community is to get the real estate values down to a half of what they are today. He quickly adds, "It won't happen."

And if people think agriculture is a significant part of the economy and culture in the valley, they may want to learn more about it. Misconceptions are common. When his son worked on a science project about how to grade beef, one judge said, "Can we not kill all these animals?" Some think ranchers are cruel because they kill the animal, he says. Another time, the son was accused of being a fish killer because ranchers pollute the water by using fertilizer.

"We do the best we can with what we have." He argues ranchers and farmers are concerned about soil erosion and the quality of water, and have studied what to do or what not to, getting information at government agencies, such as U.S. Department of Agriculture. He is also willing to give a speech in school about what ranchers actually do to minimize the adverse impacts on the environment, but has gotten no opportunity to do so. Then he and his fellows started a new way to educate school children five years ago, because "Kids are resources for the future."

Every year on May 1, "Farm Day" is held at Christensen's ranch. From all over the valley, fourth graders—roughly 500—and their teachers are invited to learn about

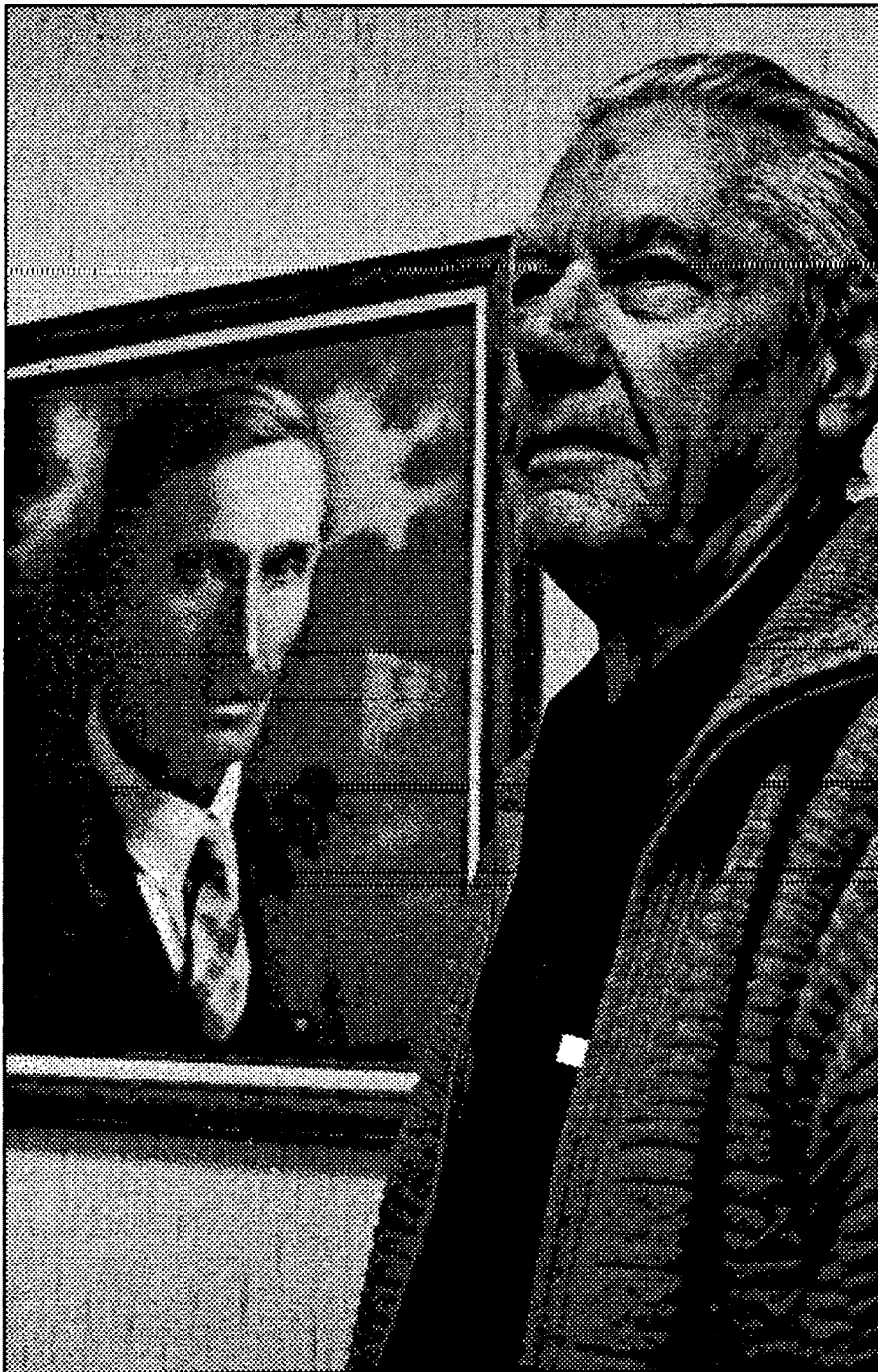
agriculture, including byproducts, such as soap and gelatin. Besides setting up tables 40 for topics, such as pigs, apples and sheep, the organizers demonstrate butter making and bread baking with the young participants. Christensen is pleased to see teachers too gain a new perspective of agriculture through hands-on experiences.

He remembers one of the thank-you letters he received two years ago after the event. It read, "Thank you for feeding me a hamburger. My mom and dad are vegetarians. I love beef."

Christensen will keep trying to make his way of living, overcoming more challenges. But if his time in the valley is all used up, he might move onto some place where it's spacious and where he can own a ranch. Where would that be? The answer again has to come from the heart. He looks out the kitchen windows, and his eyes travel beyond the neighboring houses, reaching the snow-covered mountains that stand solid in the west. The rough mountain ridge runs from north to south. Some peaks are dimmed by the clouds.

"I've got to stay close to the mountains, because I love mountains. I'll feel lost if I can't look at the mountains. It kind of orients me. Beautiful." Outside, the spring wind is fluttering young strawberry leaves in his garden. In the wind of swift growth, his efforts to support a family and to continue ranching will never come to rest.

as the pendulum swings



A pendulum gently swings back and forth, perhaps in his mind, between coming and going. Tick-tock, tick-tock. His thoughts surge from his Montana home to the South, and then to the Midwest. From there to the Pacific islands, and then homeward. "Life is like an old grandfather's clock. The ideas are over here, and they swing over there, and swing back. So, when you think you've done something good here, by the time you get to the other end, it's all wrong."

W. A. "Bill" Groff, chairman of the board at Farmers State Bank and a director of a bank in Helena, seems to draw such a conclusion from countless decisions. Besides being in the banking business for more than half a century, he represented Ravalli County in the State Legislature as a senator for 18 years. Back in the old days, he thinks people in the political arena had a decent manner and mutual respect regardless of different perspectives, which is hardly seen these days. Groff was a member of the Columbia River negotiation, debating the distribution of water, and was the chairman of Western State Water--an organization under 13 western state governors--discussing water regulations and development. The main concern then was who owned the water and to this day, the same discussion has continued. "Every state feels it has a claim on the water," and the argument has heated up especially along the Colorado River, he says.

"You always get an idea you are doing something good, but you don't. You just get an idea that you might." In democracy, he thinks, the idea of what's right and what's not often shifts back and forth. "I don't see that anybody is so correct." No matter what plan people decide on, there are always good and bad aspects. So when people argue an issue, "There are two sides, and they are both right. That's what I feel."

Changes in society also bring good and bad features. Born in Victor, the town named after Chief Victor of the Salish tribe, he has seen both. In his childhood, flour or

sugar was sold by 100 pounds in a sack, and he would get a lift from a woman who 43 visited her customers door to door in order to sell clothing brought in a buggy. "It was wonderful when I was a kid because everybody was friendly. Everybody. Even if I didn't like you, I would go and help you build your house. So, we could fight." He still thinks the valley is a nice place to live, but some good features are long gone. For example, he could give a ride to children on the way home until some point, but now, he would be suspected of being a kidnapper--or worse--if he tried. Groff, though, does appreciate the modern convenience, including indoor plumbing, that has made his life easier and more enjoyable. "Nothing ever stays where it is." What he does enjoy is the journey, making peace with changes.

The biggest change in the valley is the shift from an agricultural community to something else. "Farming is disappearing, and it should. Forget it. You can no longer make a living by farming. People are talking about how to keep the farm land. For what?" If a farmer can't make a living, sell the farm and move on, he thinks. "That's just the way life is."

For the young Groff, it was routine to help his family with milking almost a dozen cows in the evening. Tired of milking, he now has 150 beef cows on a 600-acre ranch. Last year, he lost \$15,000, and he hopes to get it back this year. From the economic standpoint, "farming in the Bitterroot Valley is not really a good thing. It's more talk." He talks about Vision 2020, which includes a policy on agriculture, but doesn't rate it highly. "To me, it's a beautiful dream. The idea is good," but interpretations of the plan would be different because the language doesn't give an accurate definition of what the plan means.

More importantly, he wonders how people see the principal of democracy. "Do you really want someone to have that much control over your life?" Regulations don't bother the younger generations as much as they do him, he says. "They came up where they are regulated. I came up where I was free, and you have never had that comparison."

Groff has a frame of reference also in the banking business. Before setting 44
out for higher education in Texas and later in Missouri, he started out his banking career at
age 17, sweeping the floor and wiping the desks. The Farmers State Bank, the first bank
in town founded in 1907, was a place where his father, H. C. "Clay" Groff, served as the
president until his death at age 91, although he never liked the title.

In the old days, he says, three employees handled everything by hand, including
the checks, approximately 100 a day. Farmers and ranchers then made up the dominant
group of customers, which is now replaced with business, home and consumer loan
customers. Currently, more than 70 employees work at the headquarters and its four
branches in the valley. The number of checks handled each day at the bank has grown to
23,000, which could cause chaos in business if the computer system fails to function.
Groff is amazed to see the amount of money handled at the bank reaching up to \$130
million a day.

Coming back to town in 1946 after fighting in the war, he joined the bank, this
time, as a desk worker. "You came and said, 'I want to borrow 500 dollars.' That was a
lot of money then. So, I wrote a check for 500 dollars." No written agreement was
exchanged. "You paid interest and paid off the whole thing." When all went well, he was
pleased with a positive outcome of the decision he had made. "Very enjoyable. Sometimes
you help somebody with something they couldn't do otherwise."

He observed an 18-year-old boy, whose father was jailed twice, grow to be a
respected community member through his hard work. But first, the boy needed the help of
the bank. Groff took a chance on him. In exchange for Groff's trust, the young man kept
his word. "That makes you feel good. He had a great sense of honor." That's rewarding,
he says. "Nobody gets ahead without somebody opening the door for him." Opening up
the door isn't limited to capital. "A little thing like writing a letter of recommendation. Of
course, you have to prove yourself." But he isn't a dream maker, he says, because capital
alone can't make a wish come true. "What makes life work is money because it's easier

than barter." Yet if it's about a dream, "It's ambition and willingness to sacrifice, 45 and you'll get there."

Making loans nowadays requires more than hand shakes or trust, which generally means that an individual needs to read through regulations that last a good number of pages. That's not fun to do, but it's the right thing to do, because "you are spending someone else's money." Responsibility and obligation have to be met in business. Similarly, bankers have to keep up with constantly changing regulations. "We had 5,000 changes in regulation during the '90s alone. That's too many, and that's why we have to hire a person who just has to deal with regulations." Yet new ideas are hardly found in changes, he thinks. "New to us, but not new to a guy ahead of us. They've already been tried or changed."

Changes in law, though, are sometimes hardly helpful for good business. "Bankruptcy used to be a disgrace, but now, it's almost a badge of honor. This year, we've had five." In the old days, an extreme consequence of bankruptcy was that people drowned themselves in the river or left town. "Nobody wanted to do anything with you. Now, nobody thinks anything is wrong with this." Even after people dodge the worst case scenario with the narrowest margin, this does not mean a happy ending. The bank has helped people make it through when they were broke, and in return, has lost their business. That's disappointing, Groff says, but "that's perfectly normal and it happens." It has hurt him a little bit every time his friends walked away. "The only people who can hurt you are friends, not enemies. I try to learn from it." And what he learned from it is, "Don't get your expectations too high." Or sometimes, a loyal customer has a reason for leaving. A customer closed the account when his favorite teller quit the job. "It's personal. That's the way it is," he says laughing, and he goes with the flow.

His nature of remaining in good spirits has been cultivated through life-threatening experiences. As a teenager, he experienced a hold-up. His family was targeted because of

his father's occupation, the president of the bank. "That scared me. I walked into 46
the house. They had a Colt .45 revolver and asked my father, 'Is this your son?'" The
barrel looked huge, "like this," he says, stretching out his long slender arms. A local
newspaper reported on Oct., 2, 1932, "Mr. Groff told them the vault was protected by a
time lock and it was impossible for him to open it." The father convinced the robbers. But
before they fled, they had peanut-butter sandwiches that young Bill made. They took about
\$15 from the father, made him promise not to notify the sheriff until next morning, and
were never arrested. "It was an experience. Nobody got hurt." The incident prompted the
family to start locking doors and got the young Groff prepared for robberies to come.
Even now, he says, "I have all my guns at home loaded."

From 1907 to 1969, the Farmers State Bank survived five more attempts: an
extortion note, one burglary and three robberies, including one in which an armed man
snatched \$15,857 on Christmas Eve of 1953. He was arrested quickly. In mid-April this
year, a branch of the bank received its first bomb threat call, causing people to evacuate the
building. It was later found to be a fraud. Groff thinks some kid might have done it for
fun. When he served as director at the State Revenue Office in Helena, a bomb threat call
would be made at least twice a year.

Experiences during World War II also shaped his way of thinking. He recalls that
one soldier out of three in the squad got shot while marching off the battlefield. "Hit, go
down and hit, go down." And at one point, he too was injured. He can't remember how it
happened, but does remember it hurt him, especially in his left leg. A doctor at a field
hospital said he had a 50-50 chance to live and put a sheet over his head. Groff thought the
odds were good enough. Lying in bed, he observed two wounded men. On his left, there
was a negative minded man who, Groff thinks, had shot himself in his leg. On his right,
there was a man who had a huge wound in his stomach, but always laughed about
something. "You could see it was healing." Although he never saw them again after he

was transferred to a general hospital, he bets that the pessimistic guy died. And the 47
other probably made it. "That was a difference of two attitudes."

People can idle themselves with pity, he thinks, but he tends to look at the bright side on any occasion. "Bad times make you appreciate good times. You can feel sorry for yourself. That wouldn't do anything, but hurt you." After coming home, he underwent several surgeries, including one that left a scar running from his chest to his stomach. "My body has been rebuilt." But no scar is left in his mind. It's predestination, he says. The belief helps him enjoy life instead of worrying about what is to come next. If it's time to get hit, it will happen.

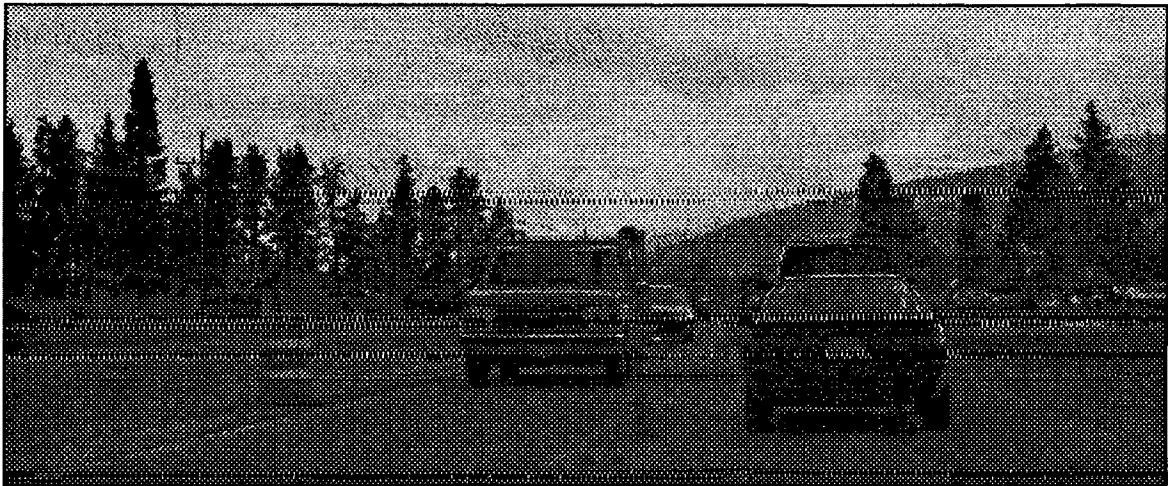
Many younger people have a romantic notion of the good old days, Groff says. "I think every generation lives in the greatest time of history." His ancestors were homesteaders who came to the valley from Missouri in 1864. His grandmother said she had lived the best time they had ever had, and so did his mother. He knows at that time women didn't have the right to vote or to own property. So, it depends on how a person see the circumstances. He has been enjoying his greatest time in history and wishes everyone a happy life. But the problem he thinks is, "We've got too many people and are getting more. What are we going to do with that?" He has no answer to it.

He admits he has made bad calls. "Down the road, you'll find you were wrong and that stupid guy was right." As a rookie legislator in Helena, he thought he knew all the answers. "But by the third session, I realized I didn't know the answer to anything. I think that was the biggest shock." People don't know as much as they think they do. If so, how can we solve problems? "You make the best decision with the facts you have." And in politics, "you are voting for somebody you trust," and let the person do the job, he says. Exchanging ideas in public is important, but constituencies shouldn't make the elected officials do what they want. As time flows, the community changes. Like a

pendulum, regulations and plans will swing from one end to the other. Are we doing 48
better? Only time will tell.

an alternate route





Life on a busy two-way highway is stressful, dealing with danger and anger one after another. One vehicle pulls out without signaling, and another keeps running on the shoulder after pulling off. The other tailgates, recklessly passes and cuts in. Here is a snail car, here comes a zipping car and here, it's Montana--the state that has had no posted daytime speed limit since December 1995.

An upcoming vehicle is moving in your lane, shortening the distance between the two of you. Two hundred yards, 100 yards, 70 yards and... Your pulse is racing faster and faster. Zzzzzzing! Narrowly, both escape a collision. You sigh with relief, but the road rage can drive you nuts.

Considering increasing traffic on Highway 93 south of Missoula, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT) has launched the expansion of the highway this summer after years of discussion with the citizens of the Bitterroot Valley. The 35-mile stretch between Lolo and Hamilton will be widened. Either a four-lane design or a five-lane one will be built. The total capital cost--including construction, design engineering and legal assistance--is estimated at \$33.9 millions.

The data collected by MDOT indicates the number of vehicles on the highway has increased more than 70 percent during the last 12 years in the Hamilton area, whereas the number more than doubled in the Florence area within the same time period. Every Thursday in July was the busiest day last year on the road near Hamilton with more than 13,000 vehicles on that day. During the week days, about 800 people generally commute from the valley to Missoula.

Beside the construction plans, another effort to reduce the traffic as well as the road rage has been developing. All parties agree this attempt was made as the best outcome of public input to the development. Oh, here comes a ride to Missoula.

One foggy June morning, while the air is rather cold but crispy, a commuter 51 van is pulling into a parking lot in Stevensville. Today's driver is Joyce Ciemny, the assistant director of Missoula Ravalli Transportation Management Association (MR TMA), which organizes two commuter vans running between Hamilton and Missoula. A cellular phone rings. "Hello," she answers to hear one passenger won't come today. "Good morning," a woman says, getting on the van. It's 6:30 a.m., and the van is ready to hit the road. Next stop is Florence.

While Ciemny keeps her eyes on the traffic, passengers can enjoy the scenery. The valley is partially hidden in mist, which shows a pastoral scene of country life. The van is coming to a gentle S-shaped curving hill. On the west side of the road, the Ruffatto Ranch extends, and on the east, the Bitterroot River flows north where the current joins the Clark Fork River. Shortly before the van reaches the hilltop, space opens up for a split second, showing an island that cuts the river flow into two. And beyond the river, the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge is located but hidden by the trees on the bank.

As the van runs down the hill, a thick mist flows in, allowing the driver a limited field of vision. A Safeway truck running ahead of the van blocks the view even more. On the east side of the shoulder, a deer lies dead. Deer mortality on the highway reached 286 in 1993, triple the number from four years earlier. To reduce the fatality of deer, removing attractive vegetation along the highway is considered.

On a 50-mile stretch between Hamilton and Missoula, there are two blinking lights and one traffic light in Lolo, 12 miles south of Missoula. The highway briefly becomes four lanes only in Florence, which usually encourages a driver to step on the accelerator to pass a car or two running ahead. At this site, there is a busy junction. And close to the junction, there is a school. Because of the heavy traffic, children can't cross the highway, says Margie Lubinski, a member of the Citizen Advisory Committee for Highway 93. Parents usually give their children a ride to school even though they live within walking distance. Traffic lights and a left-turn lane are needed, Lubinski thinks.

Now the commuter van is arriving at the stop in Florence, where a few more passengers wait for the ride. "Good morning," and "Good morning." More greetings are exchanged. It's 6:50 a.m. On the way to Missoula, the passengers are talking about their gardens, the weather or stories in newspapers. They can relax for a while before starting another busy day.

"See ya in the evening," some say while getting off the van at the University of Montana. The final stop will be made shortly before 7:30 a.m. at St. Patrick Hospital.

Established in April of 1996, MR TMA got vanpooling started last August, funded 80 percent by MDOT and 20 percent by local business. Carpooling, called the Park-and-Ride system, and ride-matching service are also offered under the organization in order to reduce the number of the vehicles with a single occupant. The new highway design will designate six parking lots for carpooling. "Statistically, when you expand the road, it'll just fill up. Nobody is out there to develop alternatives or to show people better ways to use their vehicles. That's why we (MR TMA) feel we are very important," says Ciemny.

The organization first used an '81 Ford van donated by Mountain Line, the public transportation company in Missoula. It now uses two vans, especially designed for 40- to 50-mile commuting with individual reading lights and comfortable seating. The vans are leased from VPSI, a subsidiary of Budget Group, Inc., for \$785 per month including the rental fee, maintenance and insurance. Five cents a mile was an initial fee for the ride, which was raised a penny more because of the true cost of the operation. A round trip from Hamilton to Missoula, about a 100-mile-ride, is \$6.

"In order to keep the cost down, we want to have drivers be a part of vanpool. We don't hire drivers. The drivers get a free ride whenever they drive, and a person who drives more than two days a week gets the entire week free. It's an incentive." Before putting someone behind the wheel, MR TMA goes through a driving record check with written permission from the person. "It's stressful driving...Most of the people are getting

on the vans because they don't want to drive. It was a little bit difficult to get 53
people to want to drive, to take upon the responsibility of driving." But the system runs
well with experienced drivers.

Two vans run on each schedule, carrying altogether 27 commuters, and currently
150 are on the waiting list. Because of growing popularity, MR TMA has been planning
expansion of the vanpooling project with Mountain Line. MDOT thinks MR TMA should
manage the operation while someone else actually takes care of the vehicles and
commuters. Ciemny, however, does not rush things to bring about a quick decision.
People are concerned that the organization might spend taxpayers money on running an
empty van. Funding for the project is always a key element. Plus, commuters need
convenient services rather than waiting for 20 minutes for the van to come. "The wheels
do turn slowly. I wish they could go faster, but there are a lot of different levels of
everything."

So, her mission is to run a successful program that can also satisfy her primary
goal. "What I wanted to see was, more than expanding the highway, alternative
development. It became sort of a personal quest of mine because I knew the interest was
there in the Bitterroot, and all I needed was to organize," says Ciemny. "A lot of those
people have been driving for eight to 10 years on the road, and just waiting for the
opportunity to choose something else."

To most commuters, though, getting on a van instead of driving their car might
seem a shift down from convenience. "A lot of people say that no one is going to get out
of their cars." For those, reorganizing a daily schedule around the van's might be
synonymous with giving up freedom. But it could be a way to gain freedom, she says for
example, because a driver can be free from a parking problem in Missoula.

"There are actually over 700 people who commute from the Bitterroot to the
university and 100 people commute to St. Patrick (Hospital)." And parking, especially in
the university area, has been a problem for years. "I think it's a worthwhile project

and it's just proving itself."

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She lists more benefits. "It's helping with the air pollution, and actually decreases the needs for maintenance of the road, makes the road safer. We got 27 people riding the van, that's a significant amount of cars during the rush hour." The number is just a drop in a bucket in cities, but it makes a difference on Highway 93. "It also allows the people to sit back and actually enjoy the drive. They can work on the van, they can sleep on the van. So, it cuts down the stressful drive-alone on a daily basis."

Nobody has left the vanpooling, and no accident has occurred since its start. The vans safely ran through the first winter, compensating for slower speeds as well by leaving 15 to 20 minutes earlier in the morning. "I said my prayers, 'No snow on the highway.' We had another woman on the van who kept praying for the same thing. It was a great year to start this out because it wasn't quite as bad as normal." So, once people get a lift on the van, they could realize the benefits from it, which might change their vision of freedom.

"I think we look at the idea of freedom when it really isn't. Just an initial cost of it (owning a car) is a huge financial burden, plus maintenance. I think we are sort of brainwashed." When a car commercial shows a car running down a back road with dust flying behind it, many think that's freedom. "Whereas to me, freedom is slowing down enough to check out the wild flowers and wildlife. To me, this whole notion of speed and being in your vehicle isn't." Yet she understands the peculiar aspects of American culture. "We are a culture of 'fast and convenient.' I don't know how to fight that."

After seeing an advertisement in *Mother Earth News* magazine, she and her husband visited the valley from Chicago 22 years ago to see the land for sale in Victor. "It was an adventure," she recalls. People rode horses on the main street that was still unpaved and still ride horses, although the road is now paved. It was a culture shock. "So beautiful." The Bitterroot landscape was breathtaking and still remains enchanting. The visit to the valley was like exploring another world to her. The owner of the land decided

not to sell it, but the couple bought property in Stevensville. They came back to the valley a year later, having saved money to build a cabin. Her husband makes musical instruments, glockenspiels (small xylophones), and she used to make crafts with dry flowers before she started working for MR TMA. 55

Ciemny has been involved in the development of the association since the plan to expand the highway was made public in 1992. "I don't know why it became so important to me. One of my biggest fears was the strip from Missoula to Hamilton." More gas stations and more convenient stores might stand side by side along the widened highway. "Some people say it's a free enterprise society and we need all these things. Well, I'm sorry, but I don't really want to see a McDonald's on the highway in Stevensville, which probably is going to happen."

It may or may not. Some expansion of existing strip growth might occur, but it may not be significant, says Mark K. Dickerson, a former president of Bitterroot Valley Board of Realtors. His reasoning is there won't be much demand for such growth along the highway. Dickerson, though, thinks the construction of a wide highway may bring more people to the valley, which could lead towns relatively close to Missoula to become more bedroom communities.

The expansion of the highway is not directly causing development, according to Jim Weaver, District Supervisor of MDOT. He says potential development, including strip growth, should be managed at a local government level, and thus, environmental assessment on this factor is out of the "adequate" level for which the department is accountable.

Ravalli County, as a whole, has no land use regulations, according to Kevin McDonald, a planner at Ravalli County office, although he understands strip growth is a local issue. And what he emphasizes is that the state can prevent unplanned commercial development along the highway from occurring because the state has control over access.

By restricting location or frequency of corridors, the state can maintain consolidated 56 development. The state can plan where to develop and where not to. This way, highway safety can be improved while the land development will be made wisely, McDonald says.

No discussion was held between the state and the county about the road improvement because of the absence of regulation for the county. In the final environmental impact statement (EIS), it reads, "the lack of effective access control, coupled with the lack of land use planning in the area, has led to a 'free for all' in terms of development patterns." It also reads, "Extensive strip growth patterns are already evident..." The state has no jurisdiction over land use, but this does not have to let unplanned growth take place, thinks McDonald. Otherwise, the community will suffer the same problems. Anywhere in the nation, development will eventually occur after a highway is widened.

Development and its fair share of the infrastructure needs to be reconsidered. "It's a tricky issue because on one side, the county wants development because taxes come from development," says Ciemny. "But yet, it's a burden of development if it's going to be placed on the citizens. It is really not fair. How it's going to be dealt with, I don't know."

Developers should be charged for the true impact of what development is going to do, whether on the road, on the water or on the air, she says. And charging developers the infrastructure fees might curb development.

Strip growth is something Ciemny wants to avoid. She would rather preserve the rural atmosphere as well as the significance of each town. "I don't want to see this place turning to every other place with a McDonald's every five miles, a Subway sandwich shop every five miles. It kills the town." And she doesn't go to those shops because of her belief. "It sounds a little fanatical, but I don't want to support something that I don't feel necessary."

from reaching an agreement. In mid-January, a lawsuit was filed against MDOT by the local groups, the Friends of Bitterroot and the Highway 93 Citizens' Coalition for Responsible Planning. The group claim the evaluation of environmental impacts and highway designs have not been done adequately, and thus, the inadequate design of the highway will invite more accidents. During the time from July 1987 to June 1992, 570 accidents were reported in the corridor, according to the final EIS.

The groups urge the officials to review the safety of the planned highway design with more public input. "We have always felt that community needs should shape transportation and not the other way around," states Laurel Ferriter of the Citizens' Coalition in a press release before a meeting held in July 1998 with the department. The court hearing is scheduled for December 1998.

Ciemny is one of founding members of the Citizens' Coalition, but now devotes her time to MR TMA. She was not involved in the lawsuit. "I'm not sure if I believed in (the lawsuit). I think people end up going to extremes just because they really feel their voices don't get heard... You have to take a point a notch higher or you just get run over like everybody else. I can't say I agree or disagree with what they are doing."

Although she understands what it is like to feel ignored, she thinks the groups have come down a little too hard on MDOT. Many at the department have gone extra miles for MR TMA because "They see us as a part of the solution" even when they could have ignored the idea of setting up MR TMA or seeking funds. One thing she agrees on is, "It definitely works if citizens stay involved in the issue."

It's shortly before 4 p.m. and commuters start gathering in front of St. Patrick Hospital. On a gorgeous June afternoon, the sun is still high, and people will have plenty of time to work in their gardens at home. Here comes the ride. Ciemny pulls the van over to the curb. When a woman opens the back door, the bottom step automatically

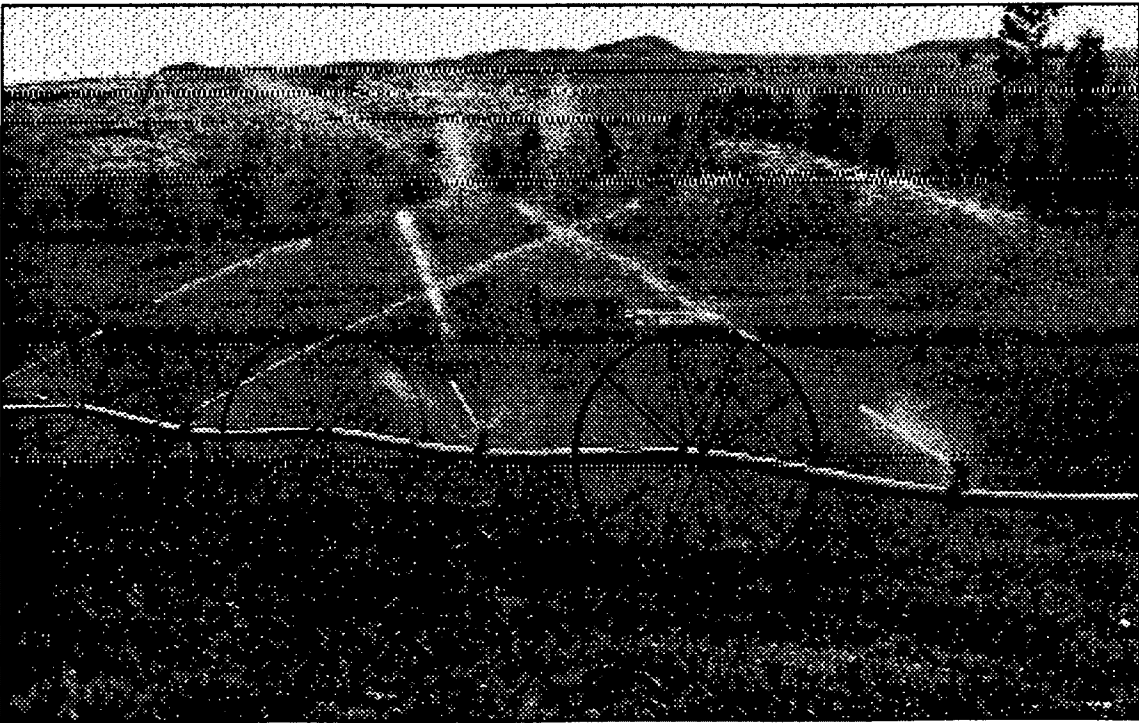
comes out under the body.

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"Hi" and "Hello." Greetings are exchanged. Passengers seek comfort in the air-conditioned van. They start talking about their day. Next stop is the University, and then, after passing through Missoula, the van hits the highway. The passengers relax for a while, and Ciemny takes care of the rest.

shining a torch





A yellowish light draws attention in a quiet room. On a four-sided lampshade, a scene of a historic island emerges: a square building and immigrants. Their stories in the promised land started from Ellis Island, the primary eastern port of immigrants' entry to America for nearly a century.

This is the Ellis Island lamp. Laura Merrill, an agent of Prudential Ranch and Land Realtors in Hamilton, bought it at a local store for her office. That's very appropriate, she thinks. The lamp greets people who want to "immigrate" to the Bitterroot Valley, a region often claimed to be the last best place. "They have aspirations. They have hope and I try to see if I can help them catch their dreams." Another chapter of American dreams will embark from here.

Merrill, though, working as a realtor for seven years, has seen adverse signs that might end that popular claim. "I actually had people who wanted to leave here because the growth is too rampant. Or people have chosen not to come here because the valley is too much a potpourri of different things. I've seen it. I haven't seen it until this year." In a critical time of change, Merrill has raised a torch for keeping land intact, although the attempt is abnormal and unpopular for a realtor. She is determined not to help subdivision activities in this precious valley, which has cost her a fair amount of money as a result.

Raised on the front range of Colorado, she has seen change rage through the valley. "It was just growing, growing, growing." She doesn't want to see it here. "I'm not saying growth is bad. Growth is going to happen." Yet what she wants to see is planned growth that could spare open space and the natural beauty. Some describe her as an "eco-realtor" in the valley of urban sprawl. Yet the glitter of her torch may illuminate the path of the last best place to remain one of a kind.

The valley is the fastest growing county among 56 in the state of Montana, 61 recording a 33 percent population increase during the last seven years, according to U.S. Census figures. The county that ranked 53rd in the nation for growth is home to approximately 35,000 people. During the time from 1991 to 1997, nearly 12,700 acres were subdivided with more than 540 approved subdivision activities while about 40 proposals were turned down. During the last three years, California, other towns in Montana and Washington were the top three places people moved from, according to Barbara June, who works for a welcoming service in the valley.

"We are really behind in thinking ahead," says Merrill. "I don't think it's too late to be planning ahead, but we need to move quickly. Once you change the landscape, once you bulldoze or directly amend something, you change the landscape forever." There will be no glue to put pieces back together. The consequence will be the loss of beloved rural features. "We could easily look like everywhere else in the U.S.A. if we don't think about what we are doing. We are still special because we are different." But with no action taken, it will be like any place in the nation.

One way to keep the valley special is to consolidate parcels to maintain open space or land for agriculture. "If I see something, I try to contact surrounding people to see if they will annex it to what they already have. So, we are creating bigger pieces and more open space, instead of creating a lot of new lots." Enough lots are already on the market, she thinks.

Another way is to encourage people not to subdivide property and to put conservation restrictions on it. She argues that a subdivision activity will not bring as much financial return as people would like to gain because of the high cost of development, including commissions.

Yet on the other hand, she understands why subdivisions are unfortunately inevitable in many cases. Agriculture has been an important part of the local economy as well as its culture, but it hardly makes a living these days. Younger generations are less

likely to choose such a tough way, and disappearance of agriculture seems to be 62
nationwide. "That's happening all over the country. That's not just here or not just there.
It is kind of epidemic that agriculture is getting shoved under the rug."

Farmers and ranchers may cash in on their land through subdivision to support families and to pay the bills. "These people that have this land want to look upon their land as something they can go into retirement with. They sell some of the property and have more money for their kids, and send their kids to better schools. I just can't argue with that right. They have the right to be able to sell their land and make money if they want to." Merrill admits it's hard to come up with a solution. Financial incentives could be a way to avoid slicing up land.

In seeking solutions, she thinks the community needs good vision and discussion. Vision 2020, the master plan proposed by Ravalli County, could be a guideline to deal with growth, keeping land intact. It addresses the importance of agriculture and avoiding poorly planned land use. "I think what the plan is trying to accomplish is to accommodate the growth we are going to see, but leaving as much open space as possible." Yet opposition comes from both realtors and community members, arguing that private property right will be violated. Merrill too wonders how to deal with this right. "I don't see how you can prohibit somebody from selling their land. There is a personal property issue." The plan needs a little tweaking because it is "more idealistic than realistic."

Still, Merrill supports the plan. She hopes to get something off the ground as soon as possible and thinks that it's a place to start, at least, for getting people to think about planning and growth. "And I really don't want to be involved in subdividing property until we have some kind of vision, until we have some kind of consistent plan and we know what to look forward to.

"I just hope that as a valley, as residents of this valley, we can work together to meet common objectives. We're always going to have conflict. We're always going to

have different points of view. But there's got to be a happy medium or a consensus 63
between opposing points of view."

Besides the adverse changes in the landscape and the increased hardship to agriculture, urban sprawl has lowered the chance that local residents can afford to purchase property. The overall property values in the region are not stable. Merrill recalls a big spurt in the '70s and another in the '80s. "In 1992, the things really started going up. I've seen quite an escalation in price, and certainly, the prices followed the attention we were getting. We had a lot of buyers all of sudden coming into the market place, which drove the price up." For example, the median price of property in 1995 was \$82,000 for less than an acre whereas it was \$122,500 for more than one acre, according to the Bitterroot Valley Board of Realtors. As of June 10 this year, the median price of more than one acre has reached \$139,500.

Yet this is the one of lowest wage areas in Montana. The average income in 1995 per capita in Ravalli County was \$15,944--about \$2,500 less than the Montana average and 31 percent less than the national average--according to the latest figures by U. S. Department of Commerce. "We still have the same expenses. Gas prices are high and grocery prices aren't cheap." Purchasing property valued at \$122,500 is likely to be only a dream for the locals. "That's not affordable for most people (in the valley)," she says, and especially "younger people are having a tough time." A mortgage payment is going to be \$700 to \$800 a month on a home in that price range, and without a well-established career or outstanding credit, "it's so hard for them to get a loan." Although the state of Montana has launched programs to help the first-time homebuyers, "our market has swollen almost to the point where we are out of the loan limit the state has."

In contrast, those who own property have an expectation, which derives from the biggest on-going development in the valley: the Stock Farm LLC, an upscale community with a world-class golf course. The development aims at financially successful people, providing them a high quality of life in exchange for big prices. "Up and down the valley,

people say that the golf course is here, so my property is going to be worth a lot more. 64
I really don't think it's going to have that effect on the market, boosting the prices as people think." Merrill thinks the development may have a limited impact on the local market, such as raising the land value adjacent to the Stock Farm site, but not on the entire valley.

"I also don't think that we are going to see the business community capitalize on the fact that this golf course is out here with wealthy people." They are going to fly into Missoula or the county airport and go to the resort where they can get anything they desire: rustic but luxurious accommodation, an excellent restaurant and leisure facilities, including tennis courts and a 30-mile trail for hiking or horseback riding, not to mention a gorgeous view. "They might come into town and buy some Montana made products, but may not significantly help this business community."

What she especially values is that the development is designed to leave open space on the property. "If another developer had come and bought that (property), they might have put a lot of homes."

Yet Merrill hopes the valley won't turn into a too trendy or too transient place like other major resort areas, such as Vail and Aspen in Colorado or Jackson Hole in Wyoming. If the valley becomes one of such places, the community will lose what she treasures. "I like the unpretentiousness of our valley. It's very genuine here. People are genuine. They are real and I don't want to see that change."

Once Merrill's life style was transient. "I always moved where the job was." While working for the Colorado State Forest Service or the U.S. Forest Service as a forester and plant pathologist, she sometimes lived on the road, staying at motels. But she quit the job to live where she wanted to after she received a notice transferring her to someplace else. It was the Bitterroot Valley where she chose to stay. Living here for nearly eight years, Merrill still gazes at the sight in wonder. "Every time I'm driving down the valley or look up the Bitterroot, I seem to see a new feature, a new canyon or a new peak. The light is hitting something differently. It's not static. It's beautiful." As a grown-up, "I've never

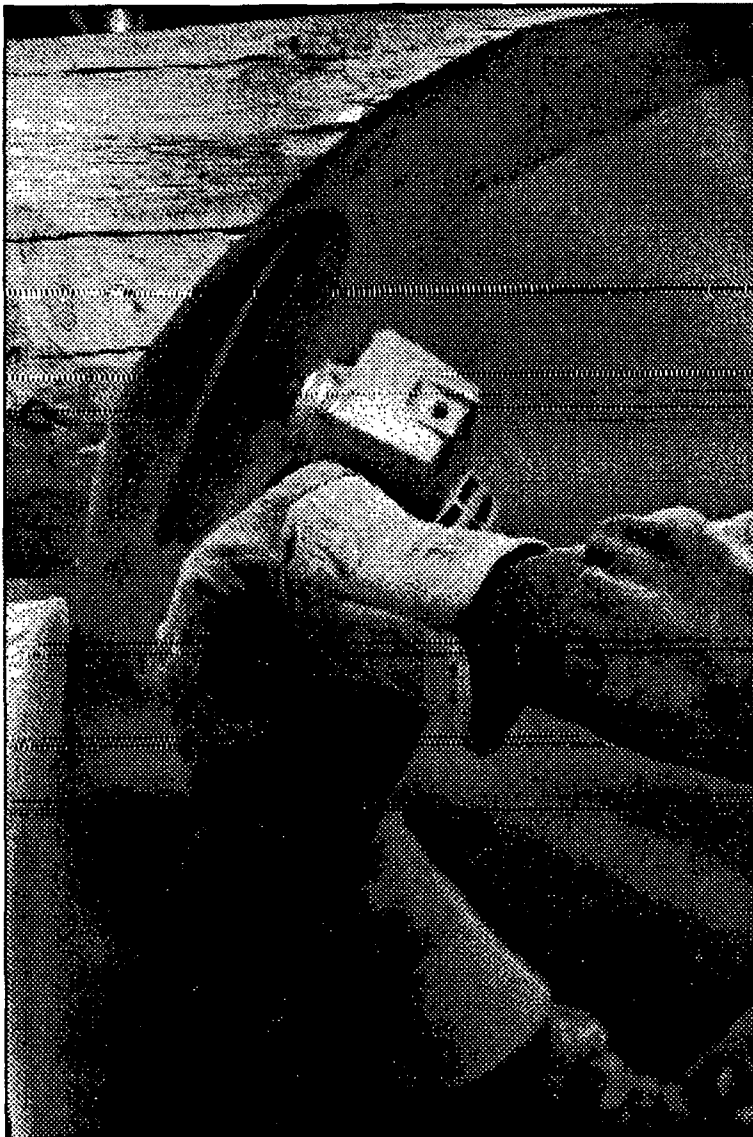
really felt that I have roots, that I was a member of the community" before settling down 65 in the valley. This is her home now, and thus she wants to help community members with their dream of owning property. "It takes a lot of leadership in the community from realtors, from people who are working on their housing. Our board does have a task force for trying to generate activity and interest and focus on affordable housing."

As a realtor, Merrill enjoys welcoming people, introducing them to the picturesque valley and disclosing as much information as she can. She makes use of her knowledge of nature, too. "I get to be outside, I get to talk to people about the trees, about the land, about stewardship of natural resources. I got involved in the important decisions that people are making, basically the selection of their habitat and their home." When people find the right place to live or to raise their family, Merrill can see their faces light up. That is rewarding, she says. "Or if I have a seller, and they really need to move, and when I'm able to help them do it, that's very meaningful to me. People have a dream of coming to Montana. People also have a dream of leaving this area. Either way, I want to help them accomplish their goals or dreams and that's very gratifying to me."

Merrill became the head broker at the agency last year and has gained trust and recognition from realtors despite her uncommon position of not selling subdivided lots in the valley. She was recently nominated for one of the top three agents that the local realtors would like to work with. She sees her role as a realtor to put messages out about preserving open space while dealing with growth. As her mandate continues, "I would like to work more with other conservationists, with brokers and people who share some of the same points of view." Also, she is willing to take part in public discussion over land use and management. In doing so, she hopes all parties--such as local government, the business community and the public by and large--will work together to have the best outcome. "We must start with the top, start with everything we want and try to reach compromises as we are developing the plan." To preserve the last best place and to respect others' dreams as well as her own, Merrill's torch keeps burning.

building to preserve open space





Suppose you were to develop a 2,600-acre ranch in the foothills of the Sapphire mountains where elk, deer, moose and birds live. What plan would you come up with?

"The challenge was how to keep the integrity of this large piece of historic ground from an economic standpoint because it's not really a ranch," says Jim Schueler, president of Rocky Mountain Log Homes. "It's not an economic ranch any more. Ranching is very difficult, especially in western Montana."

The 2,600-acre ranch is a part of a historic landmark developed more than a century ago. Legendary Irish immigrant Marcus Daly, who dug out a fortune from mines in Butte and later in Anaconda, passed through the Bitterroot Valley in 1864 while searching for timber for his business and liked what he saw. Twenty-two years later, he established a 22,000-acre ranch named Bitterroot Stock Farm to further his dream of raising thoroughbreds in the valley, and until his death in 1900, he treasured the dream and won success.

The end of Daly's era came when his grand-daughter, Baroness Margit Besseney, the owner of the ranch, died in 1984. Her stepson, Francis Besseney, inherited the roughly 19,000-acre property, but decided to sell most of it to pay inheritance taxes estimated at somewhere between \$1 million to \$2 million. The family's summer home, now called the Daly Mansion, with 50 acres around it, was deeded to the state of Montana in lieu of some of the inheritance taxes. The 24,000-square-foot mansion, where the maple trees along the driveway shine red each fall, is a major tourist site. Besseney's stepson has kept 1,000 acres next to the mansion and spends summers in the valley.

The rest of the farm was turned over to a ranch management group, and in 1992, purchased by the Mildenbergers, a Bitterroot business family, who later granted a conservation easement on about one-fifth of the land. "If it would have gotten into

the wrong hands, it could have been a complete disaster," Schueler says.

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United through friendship and partnership, Schueler and stock broker Charles Schwab, a part-time resident of the valley, launched the Stock Farm LLC project five years ago. What they came up with is proportional to the scale of the ranch. It's big.

But the size itself may not be as unique as the primary purpose of development, they claim, which is to preserve wildlife habitat and the historic site. Schueler emphasizes they will use "minimal development" to carry it out. "That is the basic concept from day one."

Their plan is to establish an upscale "community," named the Stock Farm, with a golf course designed by world renowned planner Tom Fazio. A golf course construction company also has co-ownership. "The golf course created the way for us to have a low impact on the real estate and created the value for what we can charge," says Schueler. Because of the similarity between Daly's Bitterroot Stock Farm and Schueler's Stock Farm, many people have dialed the wrong number.

Development avoids discord with nature and culture, he stresses. "It has to do with elk, it has to do with the history of the Bitterroot, which is kind of a cool thing if we can do it."

Two contradictory aspects, development and conservation, have come together on Stock Farm. "We can do a project and we can do it really high quality with the idea of preserving some history and habitat along with having a development. It's very unique. We are hoping it's a model for land use and a model for future development. I think it is.

"The golf courses take up 300 acres roughly, which is basically a very large green pasture with some landscaping. So, it's really not bad."

Sage bushes on the construction sites are being relocated and will be replanted along with other native trees, such as pines, cottonwoods and quaking aspen, according to contractor John A. Bird. He has never seen sage bushes handled with care like this for any other development in the valley.

To keep the greens healthy, fertilizers will be used, which Schueler thinks is the 69 same as for any agricultural ground in the valley. No pesticides will be used.

The numbers describe the scale. The golf club membership fee for non-residents for now is set at \$30,000 and for the locals is \$25,000. The members are also required to pay \$350 monthly for maintenance. As of July 13, Stock Farm has sold membership to 62 golf lovers, including a Japanese businessman.

For those who come a long way to play a par-72 game, 30 cabins on a hillside are available. They are privately owned and used by the owners up to six weeks a season and leased back to the club for guests to use. Dining can be done at the clubhouse with facilities, such as an excellent restaurant with a built in wine cooler room.

The 17,000-square-foot clubhouse is the largest building on Stock Farm, and its blueprint alone covers nearly 100 pages.

Back in Daly's day, the valley was developed as a timber town. "...from 1888 to 1915, more than 1.5 billion board feet of logs were harvested from the slopes of the Bitterroot Valley and the valley itself, most of it to feed Daly's ever-growing business," reads a story published in the community newspaper, *Ravalli Republic*, on Nov. 7, 1989. Yet logging practice in the valley reached a turning point through the '70s and the '80s when the issue of clearcutting here came under national criticism.

For the Stock Farm development, no logs come from the valley. In general, very little timber comes from the nearby forests, according to Jay Pohley, the president of Pioneer Log Homes--the company owned by Schueler and in charge of the clubhouse construction. Pohley says logs come from a 400-mile radius, mainly from Idaho.

Deadstanding lodgepole pines, 50 to 60 years old, are used because they won't shrink any further. The logs used for the clubhouse were carried to the site by eight semi-trucks. Pohley estimates the total volume is 350,000 board feet. Lodgepoles were finished at Pioneer Log Homes, transferred and then reassembled on Stock Farm. The main entrance of the rustic looking clubhouse will be cut out after the roof is completed and all

weight compresses the logs. From the terrace that is facing southwest, the rocky Bitterroot mountain range on the right and the serene Sapphire mountain range on the left can be seen. 70

Let some more numbers roll in. Besides the cabins, 95 residential homes make up the core of the community that has its own sewer, water and irrigation systems. The water is supplied from six wells where 200 gallons of water can be pumped up per minute. The houses start at a quarter-million dollars, running up to \$1.2 million, (and here, a modest house means 2,500 square feet). The housing sites on the lower ground can be used for agriculture.

"The only real way we can get the limited building sites we need is to charge a lot of money for one building site. They make the economics work."

Actual ground disturbed for construction of roads and buildings amounts to only about 100 acres, which leaves the rest of approximately 2,200 acres untouched. "We wanted to save that environment for elk habitat... I could have dropped the price down to include middle income people, but I would have had to build 500 houses up there. So you have the choice. Which one is it?"

Nearly 1,300 acres are designated for elk habitat. Earlier, the developers considered donating the land to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, but decided to manage it under the Stock Farm operation that has staff working on the spot.

"We felt that we could maintain the habitat better than they could because we have resources. We have a definite interest in that piece of ground." The word "better" means a swift response to whatever comes up. A huge organization, Schueler explains, needs to go through various steps--such as board of directors and its members--before a decision is made and may be slower to react to issues. "I'm trying to do a good job, doing business, of course, I'll try to make a little money. You always do that, don't you?"

While many praise the Stock Farm development for the efforts to minimize

the impacts on the environment, some other wonder if another development in the valley goes along with Stock Farm. The proposed development is to upgrade the county-owned airport for private aviation. If the county decides to rebuild the runway, and if the circumstances, including zoning in the neighboring area, meet the criteria, a \$95,000 grant will be available from the Federal Aviation Administration. In this case, the county still needs to chip in 10 percent of the construction fee. 71

At the final stage of discussion and prior to the final decision, Schwab sent a letter to one of the county commissioners saying that he would donate money if an expanded-length runway was to be built. And his offer has provoked adverse feelings among those who oppose the expansion that might encourage more jets to fly in to the airport. The noise level is already high enough.

But Schueler denies an allegation that the two projects aim at one thing, success of Stock Farm. "Chuck flies a jet here. He has lived here for 15 years. He is a local resident. He uses the airport as a local resident."

Although he says the airport definitely has helped with the viability of the community and would help some people that use the Stock Farm, the offer Schwab made was not for their development. As a community member and for public safety, he proposed it. Schueler adds the people who are coming to Stock Farm are going to have strong concerns about development as well.

The county commissioners made an announcement in mid-July that the county may build a new same-length runway that meets the minimal requirements of the FAA, if the county finds funding in the future. No immediate action will be taken.

Like Daly, Wisconsin native Schueler is also one of those bewitched with the charms of the valley. After selling his business in Colorado, he traveled around the western United States, which led him to drive through the region. "I liked this, (it) just kind of felt like home." In 1977, he moved to the valley that has become home for

his three children. "A nice place to raise a family. A nice environment."

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As an outdoor person, he thinks the valley is probably the best place in the world for backpacking, hunting and fishing, and agrees that anyone would like to maintain the good environment dealing with growth.

"I think the controls we have now in the county are probably good enough at this time" because of the lack of viable industry that demands more workers in the valley. "As long as you are anti-industry and business, which is what mostly western Montana is, there won't be any jobs. So you have to control growth just that way.

"I think that the supply and demand market system works real well in the long run. It'll be fine. You don't need instant rules."

And what the community needs, he thinks, is not a proposed master plan, Vision 2020, but something else. "We need some well-defined written plan, not a generalized vision." Otherwise, he thinks the outcome may be a disaster, with higher taxes. "At this point, at this stage, it's a wrong approach."

A right approach, he believes, is the same as the business tactic that has been taken for the development. "The Stock Farm is a prime example. You set up a well-defined plan, a well-defined cost, and bring in the management to control it."

He agrees the idea of protecting the environment is good, but there will be no way to accomplish it. "They don't have the infrastructure in the government here to develop it, to control it and to inspect it." Without precise calculations and management, a project would fail. Or in business, "If I put a plan in my company like that, I probably wouldn't survive."

He also questions the equity of the plan, regarding property rights. If the land that people have worked for and toiled for becomes valuable, and they would have enough money to retire by selling off the land, do you think the county has the right to say that they can't, he asks. "Do you think that's fair? That, I protest. What I say is, the poor rancher, the man who watched the land, owned the land and paid for the land should have the

right to do with the land if he chooses with a certain right, with restrictions, but not taking it all the way." 73

Even if the valley becomes a very popular place, in part through Stock Farm, subdivision activities may not be escalated, he thinks. "It will start consolidating, in other words, small parcels start adding, bringing them back into a larger piece. I don't think it's going to go the other way because there are no jobs. I mean this community doesn't have any real economy."

Here, service-related jobs make up more than 20 percent of the employment in 1996, according to the figures by Bitterroot Chamber of Commerce. Tourism has been getting a bigger share, and gross lodging tax revenue has grown from \$55,800 to \$100,200 during the last seven years.

"I would hope that we would have a thriving economic unit that would produce jobs to make a good living for our children along with protecting the environment. When I say 'protecting the environment,' that has to be kind of partnership between nature and ourselves.

"There is growth in the world. Population is growing and we are taking up space. We have to use some of the resources that Mother Nature is producing, especially renewable resources. Renewable resources are something we have to come to grips with. We sometimes do a good job, sometimes we don't.

"The community does not need to stagnate. We always have to have growth." He hopes the little strip of the land between two mountain ranges can be utilized with good plans and management.

"I think you can't stand still, nothing can stand still. You need to keep things going, I think. Growth is not bad, growth is what keeps our economy and livelihood." The supply and demand theory will come into play in the region regarding population growth and management of land, he thinks. "I have a very strong opinion on democracy and what that means. Freedom."

What the Daly family left behind is not only a legend of wealth, but also a legend of philanthropy. The site of the county courthouse, a hospital, the land for the county airport were donated by the Daly family. 74

Schueler with his partners may bring a modern-day legend of success to the valley. The Stock Farm development has boosted the construction industry. When everything is added up, the total value of the Stock Farm will be about \$50 million, which excludes the pay for 260 people at the project site or the costs for 50 companies that have worked for the project. So, the total commercial dollar impact could be probably \$150 million to \$200 million, he estimates. After the construction, the impact on the local economy may not be as significant as it is right now. But by next summer, 60 to 100 people will be hired to work in the brand new community.

Schueler is planning to have a New Year's Eve party at the clubhouse for the workers, rewarding their efforts in building the big dream. In spring, he'll be playing golf on Stock Farm, where he can have it all. And when his method of reserving habitat and history with development makes its debut, his dream and the development could be in full swing.

another brand of tree hugger



A simple drawing on Jim Freeman's business card features what he likes: pine trees, the sun or the moon rising from a mountain range and a bird flying low. "Forest Futures," it reads. Trees grow along a creek flowing through his property in Victor. In his spacious back field, a ponderosa pine estimated at a little more than a century old stands firm. He approaches it, takes off his baseball cap because its brim gets in his way, and then smells a vanilla-like sweet aroma coming through the thick bark during the growing season.

Born in Minnesota and raised in the lake states, Wisconsin and Michigan, Freeman has always found enjoyment in forest despite the occasional difficulties dealing with nature. "You are wet, cold and dirty. Sometimes it's dangerous." Trained in college, Freeman took a job at the U.S. Forest Service after serving in World War II and had 29 good years with the agency, planting trees, depositing timber slash and planning something good for nature. During that time, he was stationed in Missoula at one point.

Freeman still remembers the time he visited one of the campgrounds in the Bitterroot National Forest to see what he adored--big old ponderosa pine trees. "I had to hug one of those trees because they were just satisfying trees. So, you could call me a tree hugger if you want to. The point is, you don't have to hate trees to cut (them). You can love trees and utilize them." He is currently the director of Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce and also a volunteer for Bitterroot Resource Conservation and Development. Freeman thinks the future of forests and humans depends on the wise use of a natural resource, timber.

"The Forest Service is basically a job tending forests whether you are fighting a fire, trimming trees or harvesting trees. Whatever you are doing, getting into a yellow jacket, it's a deep and personal thing. I relate to the land almost as my own." To his

trained eyes, it seems that "The Bitterroot forest needs more management than it's 77 getting. If we don't do something about some of the problems, nature will take over and we are not going to like the results." A major problem he sees here is a high dense forest. "Nature is a set of conditions," and the consequence of having a thick forest is most likely a wildfire. "For instance, in 1910, about three millions of acres were burned here (the Northwest), including this immediate area. That was a real problem." He thinks people would like to avoid such a disaster if possible, and one solution is to thin out trees. He would rather utilize resources than burn them, but "that doesn't seem to be a way to the Secretary of Interior."

Timber harvest on the federal land, though, is not easy to carry out. Starting from a timber harvest proposal, the plan has to go through layers of approval procedures before actually being accomplished. "Today, you've got to do environmental assessment. More energy goes to working on the public document." For example, the document is prepared according to the National Environmental Policy Act and must be reviewed, corrected and approved by higher authorities. In doing so, if the timber harvest has environmental impacts on species such as bull trout, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Service will review the proposal, considering the Endangered Species Act. The snowballing number of regulations as well as the massive bureaucracy slows the whole process. "When I started out in the Forest Service, the Forest Service was not nearly as political an agency as it is today." Back then too, more than 40 years ago, a proposal was made based upon regulations, but the laws and the system were less complicated.

Generally, the number of regulations has restricted what a forest ranger can do in a district, says Freeman. When a drainage basin problem occurred in a district, for example, he and his colleagues estimated the work and the cost after carefully investigating the problem on the spot. Then, they fixed it within a relatively short time because "district rangers had more decision space." But such space has shrunk every time a rule was added. "If you are hired to be a district ranger, you are responsible to take care of what

needs to be maintained. You are supposed to do that. You don't need to ask 78
somebody what you can do. You are empowered to do that. A part of that has to do with
making sure you have qualified people. Sometimes those make a mistake. You have to be
prepared for that, too."

Anyone can make mistake. But he thinks at least those who are actually working in
forestry can comprehend situations better than those in an office several states away from
the problems. "The decisions are being made at higher and higher levels, whereas I think
we should let them begin closer and closer to the ground on a case-by-case basis. I think
that the people in the Forest Service are not bad or anything. I worked for the Forest
Service at the time when the job was much simpler from that viewpoint." Yet still, he
thinks the enormous regulations and huge bureaucracy need to be reconsidered to get work
done. Plus, a short-term policy that often changes as a new administration moves into
White House is hurting forests. "That's the worst possible way to run forests. Forests run
in a long-term cycle." He would appreciate if decision makers didn't rewrite policies to
stay longer on Capital Hill.

Logging on federal land in the Bitterroot Valley has been an ongoing controversy
because of the history of over-cutting by the agency. Environmental activists continue to
challenge the agency regarding logging practices sometimes with a legal action, which has
contributed to the reduction in the amount of cut. For example, the targeted volume of
timber harvest last year was 9.7 million board feet, which dropped from 36 million board
feet in 1990, according to Jeff Amoss, the operation staff officer at the Bitterroot National
Forest supervisor's office in Hamilton. Actual clearcutting totaled only 11 acres, marking
less than one percent of planned acreage in 1997.

Freeman values the activists' affection for nature. "I think they (environmentalists)
are very sincere." But he is not sure if they comprehend the issue thoroughly. "They tell
you we are running out of trees. That's simply not true. The United States has had the
same amount of forest since 1920. Why is that? That's about the time we changed from

horse logging to machine. Suddenly, we didn't have to have extra ground for feeding horses. We've maintained 720 million acres in the states."

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Harvesting timber is an effective way to maintain a balanced forest, which he calls a "treatment." Depending on the forest conditions, he and his crew would figure out a volume and a method, such as harvesting only dying trees or harvesting almost all trees because of insect infection at a certain site. Clearcutting shouldn't be considered sinful, he says. Freeman admits the look after harvest is ugly, but it does serve a purpose. When a forest canopy is opened up, sprouts will start coming out, revitalizing the forest. "Deer will love it because the most tender shoots are right there. What we need in the forest is the whole variety, all the way from the oldest trees to the youngest trees."

The life of a tree can be prolonged. "Trees are like people. They are born and grow up, then get old and die. We can recycle people as organ donors...Trees provide homes for birds and provide watershed protection. At some point, you can harvest the tree and it can go on for much longer. It becomes someone's home. It becomes someone's furniture. I don't find that objectionable, whereas some do."

Because Freeman thinks misunderstandings and pointless arguments are common, he has tried to educate the public. Otherwise, "We are fooling ourselves about who is to blame." He argues against a proposed road moratorium, writing a letter to a community newspaper, *Ravalli Republic* : "According to the Forest Service, there are 373,000 miles of roads in the national forest system. On any given day, on this road network, there are 9,000 Forest Service administrative trips. There are 16,000 trips related to logging activity, and there are 1,700,000 trips that are made for recreation purposes. But still we call them logging roads.

"In Fiscal Year 1996, the Forest Service reported that there were 417 miles of new roads built, 2,503 miles of older roads reconstructed, and 1,440 miles of roads obliterated for a net loss of 1,023 miles of road on the Forest Service system. This is hardly a crisis of runaway road construction that requires a moratorium on road construction." And he

points out that "In the saw timber category alone, 23,681,000 board feet of timber dies each year." 80

This is not simply the death of trees, but the waste of natural resources. Freeman remembers a Pakistani forester who came to America years ago to learn forest management. Besides the intriguing stories about logging with elephants, Freeman recalls the Pakistani method of tending nature. "What he was impressed most (in America) was that we were rich enough to be able to set aside millions of acres to do absolutely nothing. That was our wilderness--93,000 acres of wilderness, which is fine. To him, this was almost crime against humanity" because Pakistan's survival depended on wood. "He cared about every grain of the soil, and he knew that was his livelihood to maintain (it)." While Freeman was talking about managing on the basis of 100,000 acres, the Pakistani forester was talking about managing on the basis of a single tree, he says. "Annual growth of a single tree. He blew my mind."

Considering such situations and growing world population, he thinks forest management should be evaluated on a global scale. "A number of people live on the Earth. What is the strategic material? Over fifty percent of wood cut in the world today is cut for fire woods...We manage (forest) according to the patterns of nature. Trees are environmentally friendly materials. How can we not do that job?"

And Americans are accountable for environmental conditions abroad, too. "We import about 40 percent of wood we use in the domestic market from Canada, from Brazil and from the Far East. We are essentially exporting not only jobs and economy, but also we are exporting environmental problems to go with that." Many third world countries have no alternatives to keep their economy running, except for exporting natural resources, including timber. And those countries may not have strict regulations to protect the environment, which may cause the drain of natural resources in the mean time. "We have a disproportional share of the world resources and have responsibility to produce natural resources." He agrees that mass consumption of paper products in America should be

reduced, but doesn't think that it's a problem for most people. "In the long run, we 81
need to recognize the global communities and to be willing to share these resources (in
America)."

Another argument he makes is that natural resources made available from the
national forest here have an impact on the local economy. Among private industry in
Ravalli County, about 11 percent of workers are engaged in the lumber industry, according
to the 1996 figures by the Montana Department of Labor & Industry. Late September this
year, Darby Lumber Company--one of the top 10 private employers last year in the region--
announced the layoff of 40 workers in its sawmill, mostly because of the all-time low
lumber prices and a bad timber market.

Freeman explains in a simplified way how it happened . The economic crisis in
Asia encouraged Canada to export instead to the United States, which can be easily done
with the North America Free Trade Agreement. So inexpensive lumber (processed
material) become more available in the American market. Unlike lumber companies that
have their own source of timber, Darby Lumber Company has to buy timber for its sawmill
operation. But there is not much supply in the valley and the regions where the company
usually seek materials. The reduction of timber harvest on the federal lands has contributed
to the lack of supply. When supply is low, the bidding price will go up, which also raises
the lumber price processed by the company, and the lumber price may not be competitive in
the market with abundant supplies. As a result, the company is less likely to generate profit
and is likely to lose money. "In Montana, our average income is right at the bottom of 50
states. We need jobs." Yet not many jobs are available.

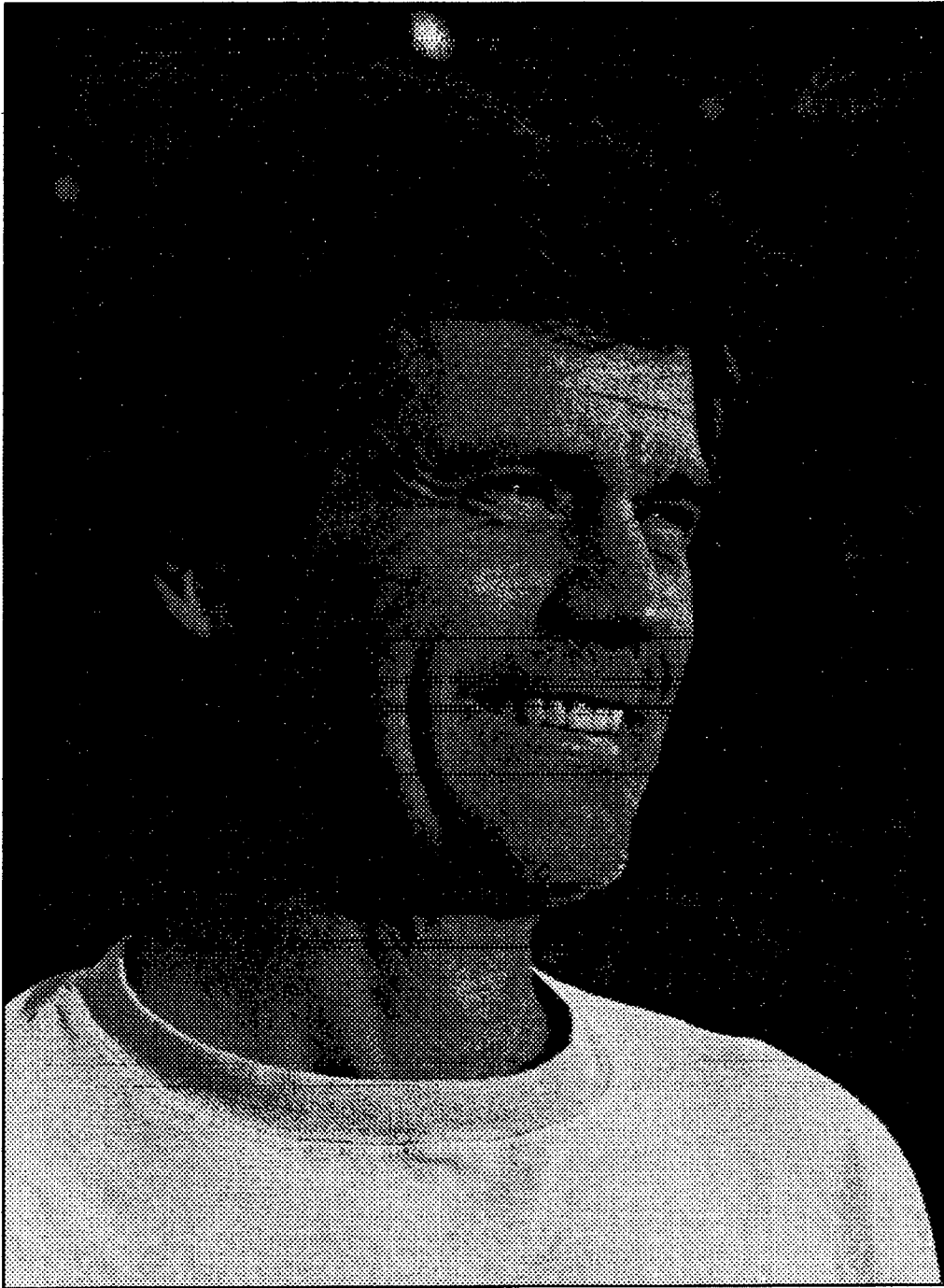
Freeman thinks people in the valley need to sit down and identify common
concerns, including those about forest management. "The problem is like a big log in the
middle of a river, and there are bunch of ants on this log. We are arguing about who's
going to drive." Without comprehending, exchanging ideas and compromising, people

can't improve the situation. What he intends to do is to keep looking for a balance 82
from which both forest and community can benefit. The national forest can be a place to
produce natural resources, a place to hike and habitat for wildlife. All can be achieved with
careful management.

Yet he excludes one thing from the national forest. "One thing I don't want is a
grizzly bear." He admires and adores wildlife, and deer are frequent visitors to his home.
But the grizzly bear reintroduction plan to the Bitterroot ecosystem will disturb the balance
in the valley, he thinks. Besides the conflict between the animal and the human or
livestock, Freeman thinks the plan ignores a grizzly bear's emotions. The thought makes
him feel for the great animal. A bear gets drugged somewhere on a hillside, lifted by a
helicopter and transferred to the forest it has never been—to a totally strange place. "Why
do we want to do that?" A bear gets scared, so does a hiker, not to mention community
members at large. "One woman stood up at the meeting that the governor was at. She
said, 'I'd consider it an honor to be mauled by a grizzly bear.'" But he wonders how long
such honor would last. A second or two or less?

"Always, the most challenging thing is to deal with people's desires and
expectations." In the forest and the community, expectations have no limits. "We all want
the clean water, the clean air, the beautiful scenery and wildlife." And people need to eat.
Growing trees and managing the forest holds the key to the future. "We need to care for
each other."

get up, stand up, don't give up





A thunderstorm swept past. A few dozen people are gathering at a picnic site in the forest to celebrate the 10th anniversary of a conservation group, Friends of the Bitterroot. United in the purpose of preserving nature, eight people got it started, and the volunteer-based organization has grown to have nearly 800 members in North America. They are proud to say it is one of the most effective grassroots organizations in the country. In the refreshing cool air, the president of the FOB makes announcements, winning lots of cheers and laughter from the members, which breaks the silence in the woods.

A soft-spoken and rather quiet man is in the audience. Larry Campbell is a founding member and a current director of the group. He knows what it takes to speak up for protecting the environment because he has been through difficulties and expects more to come. It once cost him a job at a local gas station nine years ago just because he was protesting clearcuts in the region. One Friday, about 10 loggers showed up and warned the owner that they would shoot him if he came back to work on Monday.

"They accused me of putting them out of work. Then, they put me out of work." He thought there would have been more jobs if the logging practice had been done the way he had argued. "What I'm interested in is to do it right, to do it in the right place and to do it at the level that is sustainable." Afterwards, he managed to establish a way to make a living as a geologist, carpenter and outdoor guide.

It also takes courage to stand up for what he believes in because the situation sometimes gets rough. During his living here for 20 years, Campbell claims his home has been shot at five different times by rifles, shotguns and automatic weapons. Death threats, assaults and name callings have become all too familiar to him, and at one point, he got scared. He feared someone might come to his house at night to take his life.

So, Campbell became quiet in public. While he was keeping the silence, 85
his self-respect dropped down to the bottom, which gave him no peace of mind, either.
What could he do next? "This is America, and I'm going to speak up." Overcoming his
fear, he rose again. He was able to do it partly because he was then living alone, having
nothing to lose but his creed.

Assaults still continue. Yet overall the situation has gotten better than it used to be.
"If I get a little afraid, I figure I only have to die once." He hopes those who never stop
harassing him would learn that he is not going away. "This is only going to make me more
determined."

Campbell exemplifies the way to live in accordance with one's values. And what
he values are the lives of all. "All species deserve to be living. The whole thing is
molecular creation. We are fortunate to be a part of it and need to learn some humility
which we don't have right now."

With the FOB members, he has played two major roles to accomplish the ultimate
goal of preserving nature. The first part is to educate the public. Through meetings and
letters to community newspapers, Campbell has sent a warning message--the modern
American life style has been hurting nature, and needs to be changed. "I believe that we all
of us could live comfortably if we scaled back our level of consumption." The notion of
consuming products depends on the premise that abundant natural resources are available.
Even when the premise is wrong, people never stop seeking comfort and a better life.

"There is no doubt about it that a fancy new car is fun and comfortable. You can
make it cool or hot, apparently controlling the climate, and you can move wherever you
want to. So, it's natural gravitating towards comfort." Yet people are often driven by the
mentality of better or more. Satisfaction coming from owning any car will soon be
replaced with a desire to have a better car, a bigger car, the second car or the third. As a
result, "We are wasting energy at a fantastic rate."

In 1970, the amount of imported crude oil was 483 millions of barrels, 86
and in 1996, it reached 2.69 billions of barrels, according to U.S. Bureau of Census. Oil
is not going to dry up today or tomorrow, but it will eventually.

While people keep enjoying mass consumption, forests keep diminishing. Trees
are logged for building houses, manufacturing furniture and making paper products. The
comfort of using disposable paper products, such as towels, napkins and plates, grows.
Total production of paper and paperboard in 1980 was 63.6 million tons and grew to 91.34
million tons by 1995, according to the figures by U.S. Bureau of Census. Campbell says
the rate of logging exceeds the rate of regenerating, and wildlife is suffering the loss of
habitat. "Many species have gone extinct because of the arrogance of man." Last year, the
World Wildlife Fund announced that 50,000 species were going extinct each year mostly
because of commercial logging.

"That's great to raise the standard of living, but not at the cost of destroying the
biological integrity of the ecosystem to support us. Otherwise, we'll destroy both." The
survival of human depends on nature.

"I'm not willing to pay the price. The true cost is externalized and has nothing to
do with the price tag. The true cost of this life style is the loss of the environment, species,
forest, habitat and everything else."

Yet the argument is often dismissed because it's hard to grasp the cause-and-effect
relationship between consumption and extinction.

"In the beginning, the costs were not apparent until things started mounting up."
It's like a tale of a frog, he thinks. When a frog is deposited in hot water, it hops right out.
But when a frog is being boiled, starting in cold water, the frog never knows to get out of
the water until it starts boiling because of the gradual change in the water temperature.
"Slowly, slowly, over generations, we have been blinded by the fact of the cost, the
connection of our shopping and the death of species."

style. In his boyhood, he started seeing a difference between a modern life and a happy life. Growing up in a middle-class American family, he would spend summers in a forest where his geologist father worked on his research. In a cabin, no TV or no running water was available, which didn't bother him. When summer ended, they were back to an easy life in a suburban neighborhood. "Every year, I saw both sides, and I can see my happiest memories are in that so-called primitive life."

As a grownup, he visited "primitive" communities in Afghanistan, Iran, India, Nepal, Tibet and of Eskimos in Alaska. What he saw there were valuable aspects missing in industrialized life, such as genuine culture, low crime rates, family ties and a simple but good life. "It seemed like to me, a bad trade we made."

Besides the bad trade, Campbell has come to see the role of industry has escalated the velocity of using up natural resources. "I began to realize the economic system we have, not just capitalism versus communism, but the whole industrial system is not sustainable." Corporations have encouraged consumers to spend money on their products, promising that their product can bring them a better life. This way a healthy economy can be kept spinning.

"So often the real force that works here is profit. Money versus life, biology living molecular creation. It's a conflict of spirit...We undervalue molecular creation around us and overvalue money. We are willing to sacrifice everything to money as a culture."

Campbell thinks the current economic scheme often works in favor of big corporations. "People who work in a mill are making a little bit of money, not a lot, not compared to big bucks going to executives and the bankers." Money transactions between the two, in forms of making loans and paying interests, can make them profitable in a cycle of the economy.

And the system is unfair. "Corporations have been given all of the rights like individuals and none of the responsibility." For example, corporations can influence policy

makers through making donations, and often the case is that they have the deepest 88 pocket. When environmental disaster is caused due to negligence by a corporation, a fine is paid. Someone might go to jail, but the executive directors of the corporation are less likely to face any responsibility as individuals. As usual, the true cost of an incident is the loss of a good environment and species.

During his mission of educating the public, Campbell often gets discouraged because people never take action. All his efforts are in vain. "I'm totally convinced most people are so blind and ignorant." He says it's human nature. Or even after understanding the problems, another dimension of human nature gets in a way. "I think humans are capable of understanding the problem, but they are incapable of voluntarily doing what needs to be done to solve the problem." He has seen it through the meetings he has conducted for the public. The end of a meeting is the end of the whole story. "They want to just party on and have a good time and have four cars and a huge mansion and consume a resource as if there is no end to it."

It takes something tremendous to change people's attitudes and mentality. "When it comes down to changing their own personal lives, not so many people are willing to do that. So, my best bet is just that we will need to experience either natural disaster or technological disaster. People are only going to change out of necessity."

Perhaps technological disaster may be a good lesson for the humans to learn they are not as smart as they would like to be. "It's a kind of humbling experience to think you are not God." People may abandon their egos and gain humility, instead. "The year 2000, I like that idea." It is said computers will fail to function because they are not initially programmed to recognize the first day of the next millennium, Jan. 1, 2000. It never occurred to the original programmers that such a thing could be an obstacle. Nobody can grasp the consequence of this fiasco. "To me, that is so beautiful because it's not a criminal like Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber. The year 2000 is like a technological machine that just turns itself off with no evil intention. It's so poetic--poetic justice."

continues, especially in the Bitterroot Valley area. "If we are going to protect the ecosystem for the biological values anywhere, it's going to have to be on the public land." This is where his second role comes in play. Campbell and FOB members pressure the public agencies to follow the law, including assuring public involvement in the process, and if needed, they take legal action.

The Forest Service owns 72 percent of land in the valley, and forest management has been a huge controversy. The history of overcutting is compiled in a 1970 book entitled "*The Clearcut Crisis, Controversy in the Bitterroot*" written by Dale A. Burk, who was then a reporter of the regional newspaper, the *Missoulian*. "For the period midyear 1964 to 1969, timber harvesting has been carried out on 24,000 acres of the Bitterroot National Forest. Of this, a little under 11,000 acres was by the clearcut system." The logging policy is summarized as "cut-out and get-out," as recalled by G. M. Brandborg, a retired forester and conservationist who lives in the valley. During the period of 1966 to 1969, more than 37 million board feet were cut above the allowable cut.

Burk calls such management "a national disgrace" in his essay published in the *Missoulian* on Sept. 28, 1981, stating that the agency's ill-practices "scarred much of the area's stunning beautiful terrain." Yet clearcut practices kept rolling through the hills of the forest in the 1980s.

And thus, something had to be done to preserve the natural beauty of the valley. In the year the FOB got started, the group asked the agency to cancel timber sales at two sites. A story of Nov. 15, 1989 in the *Missoulian* reads, "The Friends of the Bitterroot, meanwhile, complained that the Forest Service is overcutting the Bitterroot Valley, subsidizing the timber industry and ignoring federal environmental rules." The group took a major step forward in public.

During its first decade, the group effectively challenged the agency through lawsuits. For example, the timber sale adjacent to the Lost Trail area was spared a year

ago, and this year, a lawsuit on the timber sale in the Beaverhead National Forest, 90 known as Bender-Retie, was ruled in favor of the plaintiffs--the FOB and American Wildlands, Wise River Sportman's Association--because of a possible detrimental affect on watershed. Campbell aims at accomplishing "Zero Cut," meaning no commercial logging in the national forests throughout the country.

Some argue that the residents of the valley need jobs and a healthy economy. Utilizing timber on the forest here can serve that purpose. Also the restriction on timber harvest is synonymous with exporting environmental problems to abroad, especially in the third world where weak economics have no luxury to say no to multinational corporations.

"When it comes to economic arguments about that, we just can't afford to do the right thing because we need jobs, we need to pay for snowmobiles, fancy houses, the third car. I don't buy it."

Corporations will continue to cut trees in foreign countries that often have lower environmental regulations, Campbell thinks, even when they can get timber in the national forests in America. "They don't care about people, they don't care about forest. The only thing they care about is their profit." He hopes people living in those countries will fight for their forests. If he could, he would like to make a difference in the third world. "But I'm small here." And again, he thinks environmental problems in the third world is the issue of consumption in America. "We have to reduce consumption. We have to get a handle on these multi-national corporations."

Working on court cases, Campbell has reaffirmed his sense of distrust in the Forest Service. One case about maintenance of a dam speaks for itself. For irrigation purposes, a plan to build Tin Cup dam in the Bitterroot National Forest was authorized and completed by 1909 before the surrounding area was designated a wilderness area.

The Forest Service has been accountable for supervising maintenance that is now done by Tin Cup Water Company. The dam started leaking this past May, and a state of emergency was declared. Because of the urgent situation, motorized equipment was

airlifted to the dam, although the use of non-motorized equipment is generally 91
required in wilderness by law. If the dam had collapsed, 16 residents living downstream
would have been in immediate danger.

But Campbell says the agency made the mistake of letting it happen by neglecting
its duty. Before the incident, a lawsuit was filed against the Forest Service by Wilderness
Watcher, Ecology Center and the FOB. The groups argued that the agency should review
two proposed maintenance plans as a whole, according to National Environmental Policy
Act. Last fall, the court ruled in favor of the agency because the agency said an emergency
situation would occur next spring without proper reconstruction. That was the first defeat
the FOB had had in court.

Yet the water filled up the dam, resulting in the state of emergency. As of the end
of August, the agency has spent \$400,000 on improving the situation, according to George
Nicks, the executive director of Wilderness Watch. And he adds, "The dam is still
unsafe."

In addition, the existence of "ghost roads, phantom forests and voodoo economics"
gives Campbell a reason to stay skeptical. Because of the environmental damage, the
number of roads are limited in the national forest, and some roads are missing on the maps
the agency makes, according to Campbell. The missing roads are called ghost roads.

In contrast, virtual forests are shown in the maps. "Phantom forests were coined
up on the Kootenai Forest (in the northwest of Montana)...When you actually get out on
the ground, it's already been logged and there is nothing but a little seeding." He says this
indicates violation of timber harvesting at the sustainable rate. In both cases, the reason is
"the Forest Service, as the agency, is not entirely honest all over the national forest."

The term "voodoo economics" means things disappear in a system, and it has its
roots in the Reagan Administration, Campbell says. "Our economic system usually leaves
the mess for taxpayers to pick up the tab. The corporations come through and mine. They

leave a town with their pocket full of gold, and we are left with this mess. All taxpayers have to pay for cleaning it up. That should have been the cost of doing business."

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And back in the Bitterroot National Forest, he disagrees on tactics used by the agency to convince the public.

"Fear of fire is used in an attempt to get the public to support burning and logging to reduce fuel build-up," Campbell writes in an FOB newsletter issued in May, 1998. He writes that the agency used to put out fires with no questions asked and then realized fire is a natural part of the ecosystem. "Today's Forest Service puts fire in our face at every turn. What are we to believe??"

He also doesn't believe the agency should be held accountable to protect private properties adjacent to the national forest. Living by the forest, he thinks his cabin might be burned off some day by a forest fire.

"It's a shame, it's too bad. But I don't believe that we as a society should be obligated to protect those people from all the various possible natural disasters." His argument is that those who build houses next to the forest should know there might be a chance the houses could burn. "Take a chance," he adds. "I'll be very sad, but I'm not going to sue the Forest Service for not fireproofing the forest." Many disagree with Campbell and don't appreciate the concerns FOB expresses. "Those home owners are going to be mad at the environmentalists for stopping (prescribed burns) because they are so afraid that their houses might burn down."

The thunderstorm has gone. No rainbow appears. After going through stormy situations, FOB members are ready to roll into the next decade, tightly united in their mission. They have been described as "eco-terrorists" in a letter to the editor, but are hardly so. "There is not a single environmentalist in this valley that has ever assaulted, threatened, shot at or otherwise harassed a logger." The thing goes strictly the other way

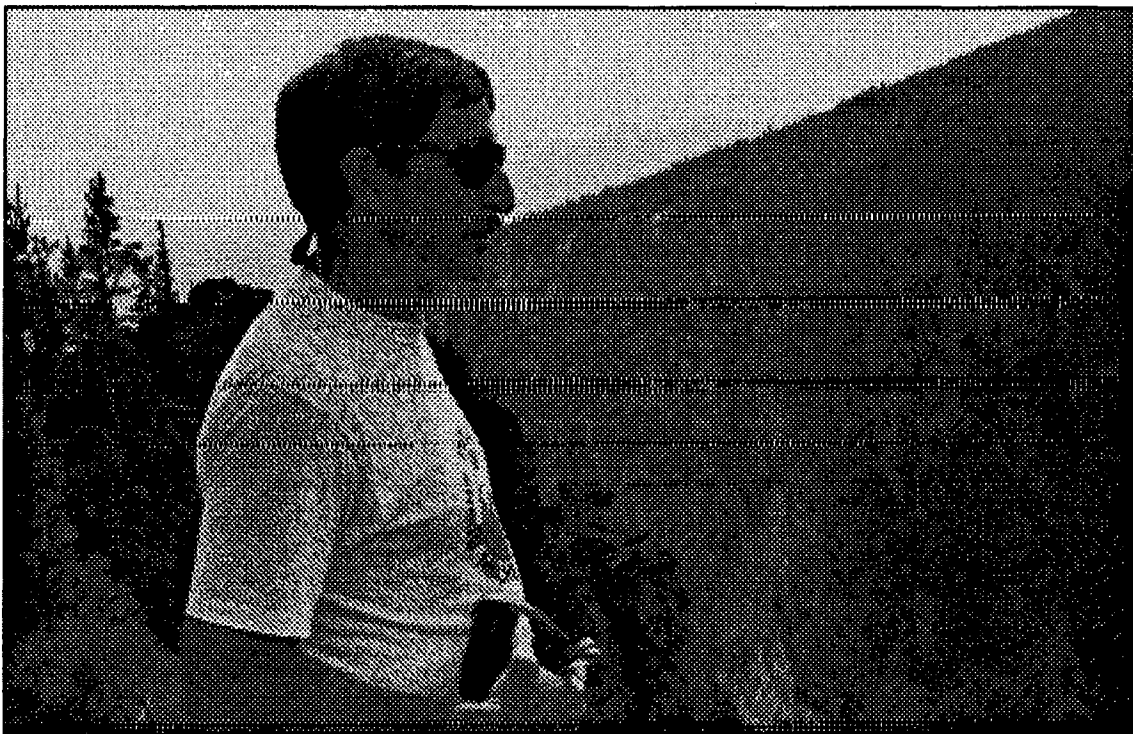
round. "Terrorism is the use of force and fear to get your way in a political decision." That's exactly what Campbell has been through.

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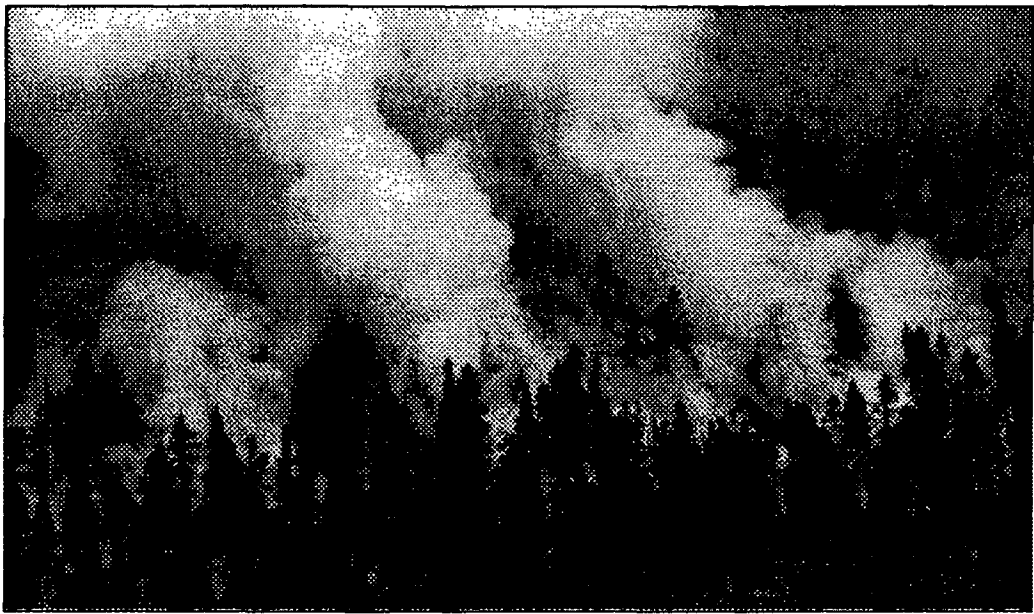
"Maybe I am an obstructionist," he exclaims. He is proud to stand in front of those who destroy molecular creation. "You bet, I'm going to be out there saying, 'Stop, stop, you've got to stop.'"

Campbell treasures the feeling of integrity that comes from working for what he believes in, not giving into the fear, despite the acts of violence he has faced. "It takes a lot of energy, and that energy comes from conviction."

torching the forest to save it







A helicopter flies over the northern part of Bitterroot National Forest, dispersing about 10,000 ping-pong ball-like spheres to ignite fire. A sphere is released as soon as ethylereglycol is automatically added to it that contains potassium and permaganate, and the chemical reaction starts a fire about 20 seconds later. It keeps burning for 30 seconds. On the ground, drip torches and fire guns are used to enhance the burn. Late April 1998, a veil of smoke covers the Big Creek area.

It is the largest prescribed burn on the national forest close to the urban development in the valley, conducted by the Forest Service over two days. The crew members, who have 700 years of a fire experience between them, carry it out with a fire engine and 5,000-gallon water truck on the site. David Lockman, a Bitterroot North Zone wildlife biologist, stands in the crowd, looking at smoke rising from the forest. The mountain tops are still snow blanketed, and some areas are too moist to burn. Approximately 1,400 acres of 1,700 acres targeted area go up in flame.

A little more than three months has passed. Accompanied by an intern from the University of Montana, Lockman comes back to the site for the second time to examine progress in the forest. Instead of the helicopter, what Lockman can see today is a turkey vulture freely flying over the forest that hardly retains the scars of the fire. A few spots are apparently brown, but most of the site is revitalized from a rainy June and a sunny July. Surviving the fire, 95 percent of the big ponderosa pines stand green, reads the official report.

"Small trees underneath died, which is exactly what we wanted to happen." His primary interest is fire ecology while some of whom he calls "fire people" in the agency focus on the safety issues associated with wildfires. "We (ecology people) tend to look at

more in terms of trying to move the vegetation back closer to what it used to be 96
historically, because we think that's more of a sustainable condition."

The forest has the history of fire. The great fire of 1910 burned nearly three million acres mostly in Idaho and Montana, including the Bitterroot Valley. Seven civilians and 78 fire fighters were killed, and eight billion feet of merchantable timber was destroyed by the fire, according to a report written by Elers Koch. Lockman says the regional ecosystem used to be maintained essentially by natural fires or by intentional fires ignited by Native Americans. Yet fire suppression became a tactic to protect the environment in the West, beginning in the early 1900s. The absence of fire has caused ecological limit in the forest.

Ecological limit is the opposite of a sustainable ecosystem. Although people tend to think the forest has always been the same, it has changed and needs to change. "So, the hard part of the question is what we want and how we want (it)." And this is where opinions diverge. "If we want to restore habitat and the ecosystem to something resembling the way it used be, we have to take some active part to make that happen." An active way is to execute prescribed burning for nature.

Growing up in Wisconsin, Lockman has explored the woods, gaining peaceful experiences as well as loving wildlife. He came out West for the first time to study at UM. "I've always been interested in the way to put pieces together, the way the ecosystem functions." Everything connects to everything else. "How one little change can have some ramification you never expect. To me, it's really interesting."

He has worked for the Forest Service here in a resource team since he moved from Idaho about seven years ago. His mission has been to reinforce the connections in the ecosystem with the help of fires. "We do have an opportunity to change things for the better generally. I think we are on the right track."

The Big Creek burn is a part of the Bitterroot National Forest prescribed burning program that the agency targets to burn 8,700 acres this year. The program started 15

years ago after decades of fire suppression. In natural occurrences, fires return to 97
an area "on average between seven to 15 years for a low intensity ground fire...and a high
intensity fire averages somewhere from 80 to 150 years."

Only two sites, totalling 320 acres, were burned in the spring besides the Big Creek
area because of the inadequate weather conditions to burn. The window of opportunity is
very limited, and that's why the Big Creed Burn was so large.

Yet many oppose the prescribed burning program, arguing that nature can take care
of itself with no human intervention. Nature knows when to start a fire by lightning. "If
you don't know, don't do anything. And I don't buy any of that." Through research on
forest management with fires, the outcome of a fire can be well predicted, he says. "A part
of that philosophy that bothers me is that we can look out there and know for sure what the
outcome of not doing anything is, because we can see it all over the hill. That's not a
sustainable condition in the long term."

Lockman thinks the human influence has made great impacts on the complex natural
system, so that nature can no longer take care of itself. It would take too long to regenerate
a forest, and such a time frame is unacceptable. He says it's too optimistic to hope that
people would let a wildfire burn entire forests in order to bring about a desirable condition.
In fact, some policy makers in the agency saw fire as a foe until the Yellowstone fire of
1988 proved something else. What the forest needs is help.

"We are trying to reduce the number of trees per acre, trying to eliminate some of
the more shade tolerant species." Opening up the forest canopy can keep forests healthy,
restoring the old growth ponderosa pines. The mountain hills here used to be dominated
by the ponderosa pines, but now, shade tolerant species like Douglas firs are invading the
site as well as building up tree density. The site is not the best place for Douglas firs to
flourish. The lack of moisture limits "the growth of Douglas fir to a non-marketable size,"
according to a news release by the agency.

"The site is too dry. They tend to be stressed while they're growing.

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Because they're stressed, they are a lot more susceptible to various insects." A place such as the Pacific Northwest, where moisture is high, is a suitable place for the Douglas firs to grow. Seeding in the wrong place is likely to stress the ponderosa pines. In the dry Bitterroot Valley, too many trees escalates competition for moisture in the ground, which may stress the growth of the ponderosa pines that should make up the foundation of the forest.

High tree density also affects wildlife habitat. "As the sites close in, less sun gets to the ground. The amount of forage available to animals really declines as the forests get thicker." Deer and elk spend the winter in the Big Creek area. Today, young plants of snow berry and ninebark are growing on the soil enriched by the fire, and there are several signs that wildlife must have grazed on those tender leaves. Lockman is pleased to see them. That is evidence of the desirable outcome.

Prescribed burning has to be carefully controlled to increase the chance of the desirable outcome, and thus, timing is a key factor. "One of the reasons we burn in spring is the fuel moisture is higher and the temperature is lower." This combination tends to moderate fire behavior and intensity. In spring, low intensity fires or ground-creeping fires can be maintained, which will kill shrubs and the conifer canopy but will leave most large ponderosa pines unaffected. The ponderosa pines are fire tolerant trees with thick bark and without lower limbs that were self-pruned. So, even if the tree catches on fire, it tends to be a crown fire, meaning only needles are burnt. In addition, the spring weather pattern forecast a good chance of rain or snow following the burn.

While the Forest Service considers spring a good time to conduct prescribed burning, many disagree. New lives start in the forest at that time. "A lot of people are concerned about things like baby birds and baby animals. That's a valid concern, sure. We tried to do things really early, like this one at the end of April. At the end of April, deer and elk haven't dropped fawns and calves. That doesn't happen until the beginning

People also think small mammals on the ground would lose a way out when the ground-creeping fires roam through the forest. "These low intensity spring fires don't really heat up the soil at all. Most cases, it won't even burn off the entire duff layer. Duff layers have lots of moisture. The soil is a good insulating material. A half inch down the soil, you can't even measure the heat increase. All they (mammals) have to do is to pop under the ground for five minutes...So, there is not much effect on small mammals."

How about birds, then?

"Migratory birds are not back yet. They usually don't get back here until the middle of May. So we have a little window there. Most of the areas we can burn before the migratory birds show up. The resident birds stay here all year and are probably nesting at that time of year. A lot of them are ground nesting more than cavity nesting. We do expect to lose some of those, which is unfortunate. I don't feel real good about that." But he also points out that most bird species generally experience a high mortality rate.

"You've got to keep more of the landscape prospective. Even though we burn 1,700 acres, it's just a drop in a bucket for bird populations across the Bitterroot National Forest. So we probably lose a bit of productivity, bird species on this site, this year, but over all, it's not significant."

And Lockman argues if no action is taken, that would be less hope for the species. "The other thing I try to emphasize is that habitat is changing, especially that the birds are adapted to more open habitat. Those species are not going to be here anyway if we don't do anything. This is a kind of, to me, short-term versus a long-term trade off. If we provide habitat for those species in a long term, we accept some loss in a short-term."

A flammulated owl classified as a sensitive specie by the Forest Service has faced a shortage of good habitat, says Lockman, and the agency is trying to restore habitat here for it. The owl, five to six inches high, is adapted to the open ponderosa pine forests, nestling in a cavity of a big old tree and eating large insects such as grass-hoppers or big

moths. Those insects are more common in open forests than in closed ones.

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Yet he admits spring burning does have a drawback. "Under natural conditions, you won't get fires in spring. In general, it's too moist. So fires normally occur in mid-summer and in fall."

Lockman thinks large summer or fall prescribed burning is less likely to be conducted in the valley because of the difficulties of controlling fire intensity and behavior. Those tend to be high intensity fires that may cause greater animal mortality as well as a immense loss of the ponderosa pines.

When a fire gets too intense, this could increase the potential of natural disaster. "Watershed impacts of these kind of prescribed burns are another big concern a lot of people have. Water is a real critical part of the life style in the valley here. And it's kind of a limited supply." People think the burn might reduce the water in streams or in wells.

"We have some experiences in Montana and Idaho. What we had were really intense fires that burnt 100,000 acres in one summer." An intense fire can sterilize soil. "The nutrients are cooked out of it. It loses the structure and actually, it becomes hydrophobic." The water cannot penetrate the top soil, and it takes at least a year or two for the hydrophobic soil to be able to absorb water again.

Combined with heavy rain, such a soil condition could pull the trigger of a natural disaster. The water runs off the soil, which eventually disturbs the sterilized soil, and then, "It can end up an incredible soil movement or erosion problem." It happened in Idaho after the blaze. "On a fairly steep creek in Idaho afterwards, there was just nothing but the bed rock. It stripped off all vegetation." It also occurred in the Bitterroot. "Thousands of cubic feet of soil were deposited into the creek. It's a combination of having hydrophobic soil and having rain on top of that. So a fire has the potential of creating watershed problems." This means the consequence of a high intensity fire could be an increase of sediment in streams and the loss of bull trout. But in spring, the low intensity fire in the Big Creek area had minimal impacts on watershed.

disagree with spending taxpayers' money on prescribed burns to protect a small portion of residents in the valley. As the forest gets thicker, the risk to the public increases because the potential of high-intensity fire goes up. By burning fuel build-up, the agency intends to reduce the risk to the residents and their property on the private land close to the forest. "I guess I don't have a real good answer for that. Quite frankly, the Forest Service is pretty much obligated to try to protect people who either utilize forest itself or live nearby."

A lawsuit has been filed against the Forest Service for not taking fire prevention action prior to a forest fire, although the case didn't take place in the valley, he says. A fire started on the federal land eventually burned down a private residential property next to the forest. The agency was held liable. "People who come here don't have a clue that the woods might burn." Lockman wishes they would understand the risk associated with living close to the forest and how to be prepared for it.

Requests to the agency are always high. "A lot of people expect us, for instance, to plow the Forest Service road that goes by their place during the winter when we don't have any responsibility to do that and don't have money to do it unless there is a particular reason, like timber sales up there."

For the Big Creek burn, Montana State Wildlife, Fish and Parks provided the major funding, says Lockman. About \$25,000 was spent on the project, which the officials say is an inexpensive way to protect the public. The prescribed burn will cost the agency somewhere between \$10 to \$85 per acre whereas a wildfire could cost it between \$500 to \$1,000 per acre to put out. Sometimes, a wildfire costs human lives. Wildfires claimed 42 lives of firefighters in 1994 alone, according to Tim Eldridge, an information assistant of the Forest Service Northern Region in Missoula.

Lockman thinks taxpayers money spent on the prescribed burns is the same as the expenses that the agency need to maintain hiking trails for the public safety, although not all people used the trails.

A direct impact of the Big Creek burn on the residents was smoke. The anticipated wind flow fell short. "We tried to pick a day when we thought the chance of smoke, the impacts on the valley were going to be minimized. Unfortunately, it didn't work out." 102

The first plan had to be canceled because of the bad weather with a strong wind forecast. A few days later, the area was fired, and the change in weather took place on the second day. A high pressure system moved into the region and stayed, which kept smoke in the valley two days longer than it had been anticipated. The process of smoke dispersal was already slow, and then, smoke from Idaho and British Columbia made the situation worse. The haze affected those who had respiratory problems. "We tried to minimize that by publicizing that we were going to do this." Prior to the Big Creek burn, the agency announced it through the media and contacted the residents nearby. Most of those residents responded with support, says Lockman.

Yet the adverse impact triggered by the burn was significant. Every time the agency received a call from people suffering from the smoke, their names were taken and put on the list. "When we are doing things like this in the future, we can be sure to call those specific people to let them know this is going to happen, rather than depending on reaching them through the media."

He is not pleased with what happened, but also thinks living in the valley is an individual choice to make. "You can't reasonably be living in the place like this, expecting not to be affected by smoke some time...it's going to happen whether we do intentionally or whether it just happens naturally. Again, a lot of people move here without realizing it. They have no idea."

Standing on a rocky cliff located halfway down a mountain, he looks over the forest. A 360-degree splendid view surrounds him. To his right, St. Mary's rocky peak can be seen in the distance. After looking through binoculars, he points out the sites and

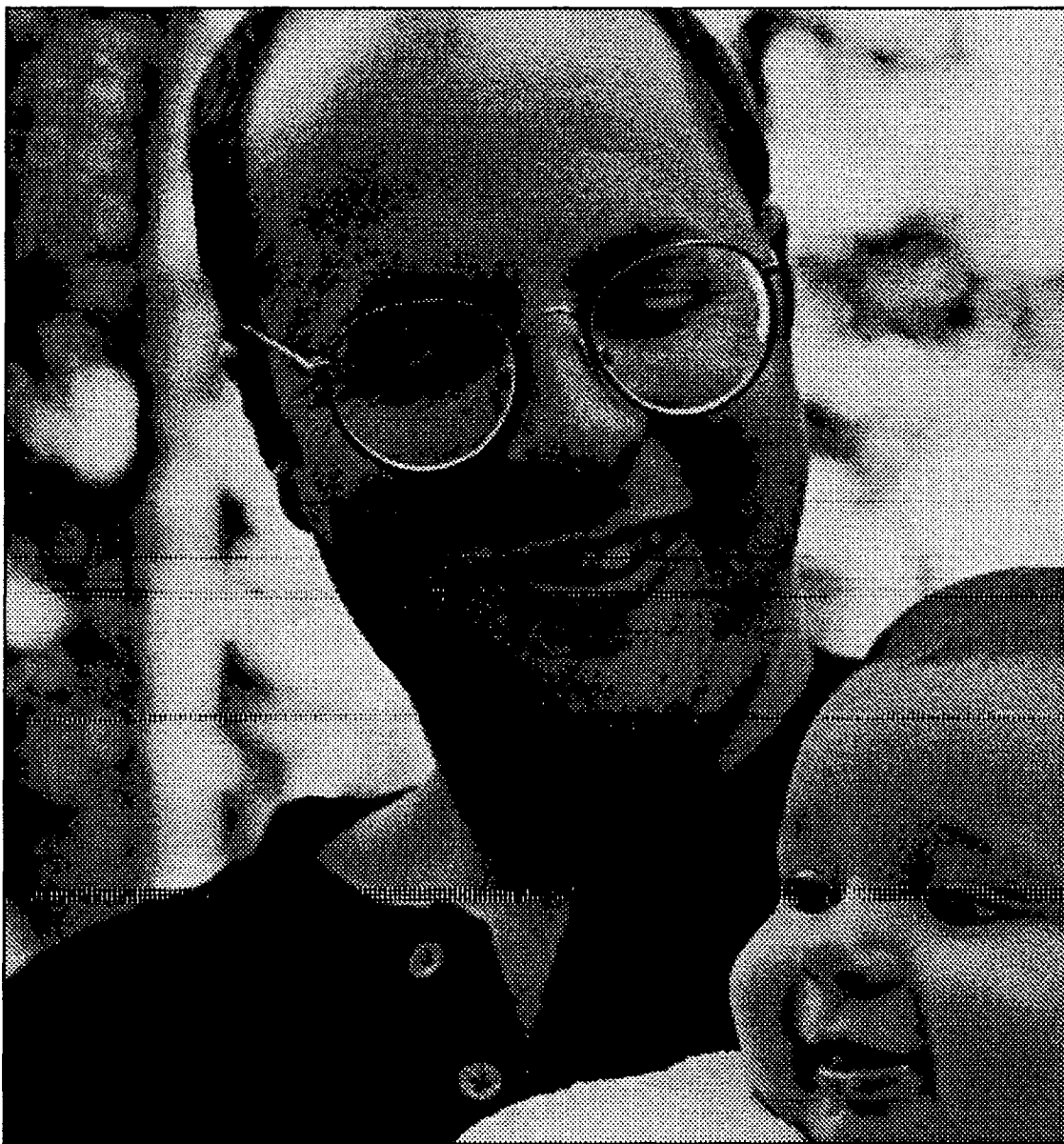
explains the conditions to the intern. Among the vast majority of green trees, stand 103
apparently dead trees and slowly dying trees.

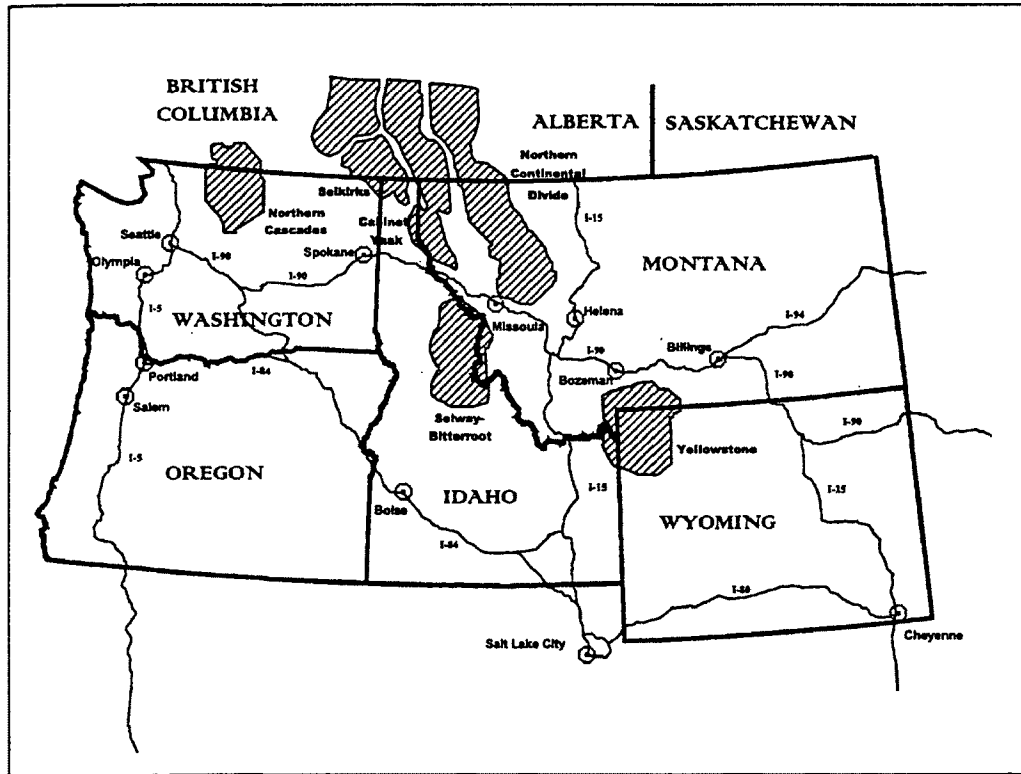
"A healthy tree is not the same as a healthy forest. Healthy forest needs dead trees and diseased trees to function properly. Otherwise, that's a tree farm." And he adds that the current forest conditions in the valley are generally overstocked with trees from the ecosystem standpoint. To maintain a good condition, some trees can be removed by burning or by logging.

It will take a few years to see the complete outcome of the burn, and his mission of helping the forest stay sustainable will take many more years to come. "It's a long-term process, and I think that's probably better to try to approach it that way rather than to try to convert it all at once. It gives things more cushion."

In the mid-afternoon, the sun is glazing overhead. It's quiet. Lockman lays his eyes on the peaceful view while a turkey vulture flies over the forest under the blue sky.

the return of grizzlies to the Big Wild





Grizzly bear ecosystems in the northern Rocky Mountains (by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

"Remember what?" answered Pooh, without opening his eyes. "Remember that even if we're apart, I'll always be with you." Pooh opened his eyes and looked up at his very best friend. "Yes, Christopher Robin," he said. "And I'll always be with you, too."

-from the Search for Christopher Robin

In his father's arms, Brendan smiles, stretching out his arms towards something only he can see. Little hands grab the air and let it go. And again. His curious mind absorbs anything he can see, feel, hear, taste, smell and perhaps imagine.

"I want to leave him something of the world that used to exist in terms of allowing him to benefit from it," says Shawn Wathen, of his 8-month-old son. Something he wants to leave for the child is, in fact, the foundation of all: Mother Nature. "There is a peace about it that I've never experienced anywhere else. The peace of mind and the peace of body. Something about the connection I can make.

"We all owe an obligation to those generations that won't be around here another hundred or two hundred years to at least give them a taste of what it was like. We only have a taste of what's left."

And what's left is getting marginal because of the modern life style that proclaims human progress. To start with, "progress" is a skewed word, he thinks, because such passage has its cost--the loss of bio-diversity.

"There has to be room for everything. We have to be generous. We have that capability to be generous. We destroy so much habitat, so many species." He wants to think there is still some hope to enhance the diversity in nature.

One opportunity was brought to the valley when the grizzly bear recovery plan for the Bitterroot ecosystem was made public in 1994. "I would love to see the grizzly bear

come back to the Bitterroot, in an intact ecosystem, managing all species as inherently having the right to exist in peace, having a sustainable habitat." Enhancing bear recovery is a small way, but it is an important way, he thinks. Working at Chapter One Book Store in Hamilton, Wathen has devoted his spare time to educating the public as a member of the Friends of the Bitterroot. "Basing your decisions on what you feel is right, you commit your time and energy," he says. At the county fair booth, at schools, he has talked about the magnificent animal and the importance of sharing room with it, in hopes of improving the connection between the humans and nature. 107

"That's where all begin to recognize that human species are born in the vast majority of existence on the planet. We are part of the ecosystem, part of the environment, part of the biosystem. The big mistake is that human 'progress' divorced from the natural world."

This divorce often misleads people to think as if the humans were above all. "If those species disappear, does that matter? I don't see it affecting my economic bottom line. I don't see it affecting my ability to go to work each day. I don't see it affecting my family. But we're not as smart as we'd like to believe. I don't see how you can say that's not important." An effect may not be apparent, but the human too depends on other species, he says.

Because it's important to increase bear population, he urges the government agencies to do the right thing. Many, including Wathen, wonder if we are planning for welfare of the bear or ourselves. It's supposedly for the bear. But are we planning the best for the bear? The question remains unanswered, and Wathen's mission continues. "I have to try. I won't see the end result because it may be 100 years before we ultimately see the end result. But I have to try."

This is not a bedtime story for children who cuddle a stuffed bear until falling asleep. It's complicated, with no happy ending guaranteed. But when Wathen's son is grown up, this can be a story that makes the son proud of his father. The father has been

doing what he feels is right--bringing about the best for the bear. And he is doing it 108
because he thinks it's best for children, including his son, and for generations yet unborn.

At the end of the 20th century, endangered wildlife needs political recognition as much as habitat in order to dodge extinction. Wildlife biology often carries less weight because of management complexities and conflict of interests, including economic factors. Grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot ecosystem is no exception. The issue is political, but to Wathen, it is an issue of humanity. "The ultimate goal is a sustainable quality of life that has room for all species and all people who can understand the importance of biodiversity in the web of life."

The grizzly bear is only one of 1,451 species that are listed under Endangered Species Act of 1973, but it may be the most awesome--and the most feared. Today, an estimated 800 to 1,000 grizzly bears live in the northwestern states, mainly in Wyoming and Montana. In 1975, the bear was classified as a threatened species south of the Canadian border, and the Bitterroot ecosystem was recognized as a recovery area along with the Bob Marshall and Yellowstone areas.

The recovery plan in the Bitterroot ecosystem was finalized in 1982, and the evaluation of the plan got started three years later. The ecosystem is considered the largest remaining tract suitable for grizzly bear habitat in the lower 48 states. The analysis area--26,056 square miles or the size of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont combined--extends through western Montana and central Idaho, including three wilderness areas: the Frank Church River of No Return, the Selway-Bitterroot and the Gospel Hump Wilderness areas. It also includes a small portion of private land, such as parcels owned by lumber companies. On a Forest Service map, private land and federal land make a small checkerboard pattern to the north of the Bitterroot National Forest.

A team of seven experts, made up of wildlife biologists and government agents, has taken the primary responsibility for putting out the draft environmental impact statement

(DEIS) for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For the recovery plan, several 109 more government agencies have been involved: the U. S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the State of Montana, the State of Idaho and the State of Wyoming. Nobody seems to know the sum of expenses spent on planning since 1982. "I don't even begin to guess it," says Laird Robinson, a public affairs specialist for the FWS in Missoula. "It's not simple like buying a Baby-Ruth." He says it is hard to tell whether a particular cost is strictly for the bear recovery plan.

Dr. Christopher Servheen has led the primary group as a grizzly bear recovery coordinator with his experiences gained through working around the carnivores for nearly two decades. He can be one of the best friends of the bear. When asked about his feelings and affections for the bear, he pauses to think and says, "yeah." He thinks he has some.

Besides the government officials, the public was encouraged for the first time to plan a management scheme for wildlife protected by the ESA. The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, a citizens involvement group and Resource Organization on Timber Supply (ROOTS) have participated in crafting the draft. Considering the cultural ties between the animal and Northwest Indian tribes, the officials asked three tribal chairmen to review the draft as well.

A search for the grizzly bear was conducted for five years under the guidance of Servheen. While the search team found somewhere between 8,000 to 10,000 black bears, there were no grizzly bears. It concluded that no verified tracks have been documented in the area for more than 50 years.

The DEIS made public in July 1997 presents four alternatives. Alternative One recommends reintroduction of a "nonessential experimental" population. Alternative Two is natural recovery. Alternative Three would prevent bears from recovering naturally. Alternative Four recommends reintroduction of a threatened population with full protection of the ESA. The team chose Alternative One as a preferred plan, which was agreed to by Defenders of Wildlife, the National Wildlife Federation, ROOTS and the Intermountain

Forestry Industry Association. The term "nonessential experimental" means that 110
the loss of a reintroduced population would not likely decrease the survival of the species in
the wild. The preferred plan was first expected to be implemented this past summer,
although it didn't occur. More time was needed to reach a final decision and to make funds
available.

Prior to the grizzly bear plan, a wolf recovery program took a step forward in 1995
by releasing a "nonessential experimental" population in Yellowstone National Park and
central Idaho. Twenty-nine wolves were brought from Canada in that year, and 35 more
were set free in 1996. Recovery has been successful with 20 breeding packs, and the total
Idaho population related to the recovery plan alone is estimated at more than 120 wolves as
of September 1998. Yet many scientists say this cannot be applied to the bear recovery
plan, because the two animals are substantially different in terms of a reproductive rate.

In addition, the apparently successful wolf program suffered a crippling blow in
December 1997 when U. S. District Judge William Downes in Wyoming ruled that the
FWS had illegally introduced the wolves. The program had reduced full protection under
the ESA for the wolves that had already migrated to the areas by themselves. The judge
ordered reintroduced wolves and their offspring to be removed from the area, but he also
stayed the order stay pending an appeal. As of mid-October, no action has been taken.

A random telephone survey conducted by Responsive Management in June 1995
showed that 61 percent of 919 local respondents generally support reintroduction of grizzly
bear. Nationwide, 77 percent of respondents support the idea. Yet strong opposing voices
exist. In the summary of comments from general public made available in February 1998,
"...it is a waste of tax dollars and a 'fleecing of America.'" Another writes, "We do not
need our forests and other public lands shut down and put people out of jobs to encourage
the grizzlies to roam into our back yards and endanger our lives." The other says, "As a
rancher and cattle owner the reintroduction of grizzly bears would be a grave mistake."

In the valley, public safety is the major concern, Servheen says. And 111
public support in the immediate region is essential. "The key to recovery in the BE
(Bitterroot ecosystem) would likely be due to effective management, including elimination
of human-caused mortality, rather than quantity or quality of habitat," the DEIS states.

"Fear of the unknown," says Wathen. Whitebark pine nuts and berries will be the
main source of nutrition for the carnivores in the Bitterroot ecosystem. The bears won't
camp out at the Safeway parking lot, mauling children, he says. But people are afraid of
the bear. "I don't want to make light of fear. It's understandable, especially when you
realize you are not necessarily on the top of the food chain any longer." In a region where
many enjoy spending time in the forest, an encounter with a bear is what they fear.
Pointing to his own experience, Wathen says, living in the valley most of his life, he has
seen a black bear in the forest on few occasions despite a population of more than 8,000.
"The chances are so remote. But you are not going to convince people that are afraid."

He also thinks a conflict between livestock and the animal is "severely over-
blown." He recalls his friend who purchased a gun when wolves were reintroduced to
central Idaho two years ago. The friend was convinced that the wolves would come down
to his ranch to chew on the cows. Under Alternative One, the government-preferred plan,
no compensation would be available for the loss of livestock. Instead, private funding
might be encouraged. Defenders of Wildlife has administrated the Wolf Compensation
Trust since 1987 and has spent \$5,001 in compensation to ranchers since wolves were
introduced to the recovery areas.

"There is no question livestock is their livelihood," says Wathen. "But on the other
hand, the amount of depredation that will occur is so minute. That's not to say it's not
going to affect individual ranchers. There is a chance. We haven't seen much depredation
of livestock by wolves which are far more moveable than grizzlies." No verified livestock
losses occurred in the Bitterroot Valley, according to the Defenders' Wolf Compensation
Trust report.

Many reintroduction supporters, including Wathen, in fact don't like the preferred alternative mainly because of the lack of habitat protection. "The preferred alternative is essentially a dead-bear alternative," Wathen says, because it will allow people a greater chance to kill the bear than it will under Alternative Four. 112

The ESA allows people to kill the bears in self-defense or in defense of others. Under Alternative One, however, a rancher may obtain permission to kill a bear that is killing or pursuing livestock on private land if no other way to capture a bear is available. "It would be better to have the no-action alternative," says Wathen.

The supporters of Alternative One argue that its strength is flexible management by the officials and a 15-member Citizen Management Committee appointed by the Secretary of Interior. The philosophy behind the committee is that government regulation of private lands or livestock depredations could be managed better with public involvement. Montana Republican Gov. Marc Racicot also values this approach. The members will make up a cross-section of interests, reflecting a balance of viewpoints, knowledge and experience in natural resource issues, according to the DEIS. "Unfortunately, it's just a game--a chess game that they are playing to determine they can still cut trees," says Wathen.

He prefers Alternative Four: reintroduction with full protection. The alternative would comprise an immense landscape, about 21,650 square miles--the size of six Yellowstone National Parks, for the animal to survive whereas Alternative One designates only 5,700 square miles as the recovery area. Many agree with his choice. Under Alternative Four, the bears cannot be legally killed in defense of property. Also no road building or timber harvest on the Forest Service roadless areas will be allowed whereas timber harvesting and mining activities could be restricted on private lands. Anywhere from 288 to 1,286 timber-harvest related jobs could be lost annually for a decade, according to the DIES.

Alternative Four was originally drafted by Dr. Charles Jonkel, the director of the Ursid Research Center and president of the Great Bear Foundation. Although the research

led by Servheen concluded that no grizzly bears live in the region, a group of 113 scientists, including Jonkel, believes that a small population of grizzly bears still exists in the recovery area. Jonkel documented evidence of the grizzly bear in the area until 1983, collecting hair, claw cuts on trees and palm marks. He hopes to see Alternative Four carried out. "I think it's the best one from the biologist standpoint," Jonkel says.

"Show me evidence," says Servheen. Without valid evidence, it's mere talk to him. Servheen thinks it would be good news if bears still lived in the recovery zone. And there is another consideration. If a grizzly bear population exists, it will be no longer "reintroduction" of the bear, but "augmentation" that gives the animal automatic full protection under the ESA. In other words, commercial and recreational use in the area would be restrained.

Wathen thinks the government agencies are reluctant to hear this. "If there are the bears up there, they have to move them to protect. That means they are protecting their habitat. They aren't interested in doing that based on their preferred alternative."

So, back to the question: Is the recovery plan for the bear's sake? If Alternative One is implemented, the answer to the question, Wathen thinks, will be no. "I think the worst thing that we can do is to permit the government-preferred alternative, because that's just sacrificing bears for no reason, for a political moment with no long-term view. Just a political feel-good moment. It's like a press photo moment. 'OK, here we are releasing a bear.' And the cameras go away, the bears die, and they can say, 'Well, we tried. Ah, c'est la vie.'"

The decision on preferred Alternative One has divided the scientific community as well. Many urge Alternative Four should be chosen because full protection will increase the chance of successful recovery in the ecosystem. For the most part, the difference between Alternative One and Alternative Four is not about science. "It's an issue of politics. It's an issue of public attitudes," says Dr. Sterling Miller, a senior counsel of the

National Wildlife Federation. In February 1998, he expressed his concerns in 114 a newsletter, *International Bear News*, published by two organizations: the International Association for Bear Research (IBA), and Management and the IUCN/SSC Bear specialist group. Miller was then the president of the IBA.

"Alternative Four, the 'conservation biology' alternative, is the strongest alternative from the purely biological perspective...If it could be implemented, our council agrees that this protection would give the bears the best chance of successfully establishing an available self-sustaining population and would do this in the shortest period."

Yet the IBA's 10 council members endorsed Alternative One by an 8-2 vote. Despite his endorsement for Alternative Four, Miller too voted for Alternative One because of the "political and social environment," including economic development. This endorsement was criticized. Dr. Brian L. Horejsi calls the decision "regrettable," because the issue was only partially introduced to the members by Servheen before the vote.

Miller retorted in the newsletter. "...it appears that there are times when some advocates for grizzly bears in the lower 48 states would prefer to pick a fight with their colleagues than win the 'prize' of accomplishing something meaningful like reintroducing bears into areas from which they've been extirpated."

Perhaps, it's a fight over ethics. In *Bear News*, published by the Great Bear Foundation, Jonkel emphasized the role of scientists. "It is the duty of the scientist, the bear biologist, however, to present the facts, and to recommend solutions which are the best for the bears...Managers and elected officials should deal with economics vs. science, political pressures vs. the public will, following the law vs. compromise. The scientist should not vote for compromise, unless as a private citizen."

Miller later elucidated his position as a scientist. "If we only consider biology and not other considerations, we will become increasingly marginal and unable to influence outcomes that are important to wildlife. Whether we recognize it or not, scientists make concessions to political and social realities all the time...We've also lost too much

ground when we attempt to ignore local concerns on resource management issues." 115

Still, Jonkel wants to draw a line between politics and wildlife biology. "If the scientist doesn't stay ethical, who would? Politicians? No."

"It's simply like this," says Dr. John J. Craighead, the executive director of Craighead Wildlife-Wildlands Institute. "We know only two things to limit (grizzly bear population). One is sufficient habitat, and the other is man, a predator. All we have to do is to put some grizzly bears in this area and we can prevent man-caused mortality from happening. They are going to do fine. Everything above that, it's political."

Why is the issue so political? One short answer could be funding. In both Alternative One and Four, the estimated annual cost for the reintroduction phase alone is just under \$2 million. Servheen says no federal funds will be available for Alternative Four and that no one is willing to give up harvesting timber or forest recreation. The hunting loss is estimated at \$288,700 per year.

Miller agrees that funding is a severe problem, pointing out an appropriation bill introduced in February 1996. The Idaho Legislature urged Congress to withdraw funding for actual reintroduction of the grizzly bear into Idaho, although funds could be available for studying bear recovery. Under the ESA, the bears have to be protected. Yet the Idaho Legislature asserted the political pressure, which might have worked. Congress stipulated that no money should be spent on actual reintroduction of the bear when the 1997 fiscal year budget was approved for the FWS, according to Thomas M. France, senior counsel of the National Wildlife Federation. The same stipulation is made in the 1999 fiscal year budget. If the final decision is for reintroducing the bears under Alternative One, the FWS will seek federal funding from the budget for fiscal year 2000. But if no federal funds are available, private contributions might be sought in the future, France says. When wolf reintroduction budget was cut by 40 percent in 1996, major private funds were made available by Defenders of Wildlife and Wolf Education and Research Center.

"the feasibility of launching into a new effort without achieving recovery in the current identified ecosystems." He pointed out the lack of adequate funding for existing plans in the Yellowstone ecosystem and the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem. Montana is currently contributing over \$225,000 to recovery efforts while the Service allocated \$25,000. "This is important to mention since the Endangered Species Act actually requires 90 percent federal funding and 10 percent state." He thinks the recovery plan in the Bitterroot ecosystem needs to be improved. Otherwise, "I think we need to reevaluate this process," he wrote.

Wathen supports a plan under Alternative Four to link the recovery zones between the Bitterroot ecosystem and the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem to the north of the Bitterroot Valley. In addition, he hopes the linkage will be extended to the Yellowstone ecosystem and the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem. A linkage or a corridor refers to a broad area of suitable habitat between two recovery zones, and it is not a narrow path for the bears to move back and forth, according to Wayne Kasworm, a wildlife biologist with the FWS. A linkage can be maintained by road closure in a certain area.

Under Alternative Four and One, over a five-year period, a minimum of 25 bears--sub-adult or adult bears--will be brought into the ecosystem after being captured in Glacier National Park, Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Yellowstone ecosystem and southeast British Columbia in Canada. The reason why bears are brought from these areas and not from Alaska is because of acclimation, according to Kasworm. An Alaskan grizzly bear will have a tough time adapting itself to a new environment because of significant changes in habitat, especially in food sources.

Wathen disagrees on the plan to take out bears from the Northern Continental Divide and the Yellowstone ecosystems, because he thinks the natural bear recovery programs there are still in progress. According to the DEIS, more than 500 bears live in

the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem whereas nearly 250 bears live in

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Yellowstone. With corridors, the bears will be encouraged to move between the recovery zones instead of merely being relocated in isolated areas, which Wathen wants to see.

An isolated population would eventually lead to inbreeding, which can leave the bears susceptible to diseases. According to an editorial by Scott Samuels, an assistant professor at the University of Montana, "Grizzlies will not survive without more bears and corridors connecting the habitat 'islands' that already exist." Samuels asserts that "breeding adults are only part of the total population," and thus among breeding-age adults, three out of four are non-breeding grizzlies. Plus, a bear gets pregnant every two to three years.

Wildlife biology, though, can be more complicated. The scientists know a lot about the bears, but not everything, says Miller of the National Wildlife Federation. Despite inbreeding, a healthy population of 3,500 to 4,000 grizzly bears exists on Kodiak Island in the Gulf of Alaska, according to Miller. Genetics shows they are closely related, but shows no adverse signs of inbreeding. He thinks the environment, including good food sources and the climate, may contribute to healthy population. Yet he emphasizes that scientists agree that inbreeding is not desirable.

So, to encourage inter-breeding, under Alternative Four, the linkage between the Cabinet-Yaak and the Bitterroot ecosystems must be considered. The shortest distance between the two is a 40-mile stretch. Unlike wolves which can easily travel about 50 miles a day, the grizzlies' home-range is more limited. A sub-adult bear, 2 or 3 years old, could move 10 to 15 miles a day, according to Kasworm, and a home-range of an adult female encompasses 75 to 100 square miles. In diameter, she travels 15 miles. A male adult can move farther than a female does, but asking him to travel 40 miles is "a bit much," says Kasworm. If a bear population exists in a corridor, this will be helpful for the bears to migrate between the ecosystems. A bear population, though, is less likely to exist in the potential linkage zone, Kasworm says.

obstacles in-between the ecosystems. Most land between the two is public. Yet Kasworm says, starting from the south edge of the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem, the bear encounters bottlenecks while traveling: the Clark Fork River, many human communities, Highway 200, a railroad and Interstate Highway 90. This past summer, a grizzly bear was killed in a collision with a vehicle on Highway 93 in Lake County, close to the southeast edge of the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem.

Aside from the recovery plan in the Bitterroot ecosystem, the agency has been studying a linkage zone, mainly focusing on the four ecosystems: the Selkirks, the Cabinet-Yaak, the Northern Continental Divide and the Selway-Bitterroot ecosystems, according to Kasworm. The Northern Cascades and the Yellowstone ecosystems are less likely to be linked to others because of their isolated locations. Yet there can be solutions, he says. For instance, a bear can be relocated to the Yellowstone ecosystem on a regular basis, which will enhance a genetic flow and genetic interchanges.

Also a study for improving highway design was launched this past spring, funded by the Federal Highway Administration. The purpose is to minimize the chance of a collision between a vehicle and wildlife. The research group has observed nine grizzly bears to examine their behavior at the southern edge of Glacier National Park. The study will first identify bears that cross Highway 2 which runs along the park's southern edge. After the bears are identified, a Satellite Global Positioning System collar that indicates the location of the bear will be put on each bear for further study. When, where and kinds of vegetation in the places they cross will be evaluated.

"Without some kind of connection like that, all you are establishing are big parks," says Wathen. "That's not nearly enough to have few isolated parks." To a certain extent, Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks provide some kind of zoo atmosphere, he thinks, where people can see the bears from a car.

connection between the recovery plan and a bill first introduced to Congress in 1992: The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act. The bill aims at designating 18.3 million acres as wilderness and specifying wild land areas as biological connecting corridors to maintain the genetic flow. He wants the entire ecosystem to be protected.

"Being such a large predator requires a large tract of roadless area and pristine habitat. If you protect bear habitat, you'll protect countless other species." Habitat is a key to the survival or extinction of all species. "Until we start looking at the large ecosystem, it's discounting the artificial political motives of the states." Likewise logging or mineral extraction in the Bitterroot ecosystem, social and political interests get in the way.

Yet in grizzly bear recovery, the carnivores need understanding and support from the human. "You have to do it right. If you are not going to do it right, then don't do it at all. Ultimate success is a sustainable viable population," Wathen says.

In mid-September, night arrives at the Bitterroot Valley two minutes earlier each day. The air is clear under the big sky where Great Bear and Little Bear constellations illuminate the region of the north pole. Greek mythology says the celestial bears are a mother and a child: Callisto and Arcas. On the ground, little Brendan drifts into a deep sleep under the care of Wathen and his wife, Laura.

With the care of Mother Nature, the grizzly bears know when to den up for the winter. They will start hibernating in late October or early November when the first snows have already blanketed the Bitterroot mountain range. They will stay inside for six months. During that time, generally in January, cubs will be born. A newborn grizzly weighs about two pounds, and if it's a boy, he will grow to weight 500 pounds on average. If it's a girl, 350 pounds. Early next year, when grizzly mothers are busy taking care of the cubs, and while males or young bears are in the midst of a deep sleep, the final decision on

grizzly bear recovery in the Bitterroot ecosystem will be made by Ralph O.

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Morgenweck, the regional director of the FWS. If he decides on the preferred alternative, the consequence might be a lawsuit. "We wouldn't rule it out," says Mike Bader, the executive director of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies. "I think it's the right thing to speak up for the bears."

And the bear story continues for Wathen. "The best thing to do is to get your message out, to explain it to people as you believe it, and you hope they make a decision based on what you believe to be sound science and sound humanity."

Tonight, make a wish. The bears will shine upon the Bitterroot Valley--the land of opportunity and the land of American dreams.

Oftentimes in the stillness of the night,
When all nature seems asleep about me, there comes a gentle
rapping at the door of my heart.

I open it; and a voice inquires, "Pokagon, what of your
people? What will their future be?"

My answer is: "Mortal man has not the power to draw aside
the veil of unborn time to tell the future of his race. That gift
belongs of the Divine alone. But it is given to him to closely
judge the future by the present, and the past."

Simon Pokagon, Potawatomie
-from Native American Wisdom





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